THE

ERRORS

OF

INNOCENCE,

IN

FIVE VOLUMES.

"For tho' I will not practise to deceive,
"Yet, to avoid deceit, I mean to learn."

Shakespeare.

VOL. III.

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ERRATA to VOLUME III.

Page 13, line 20, for from, read form
P. 30, l. 16, for, and with her views, r. and interfered with her views
P. 33, l. 16, for effects, r. effect
P. 107, l. 16, for chuſe, r. choſe
P. 113, l. 18, for ideas, r. idea
P. 115, l. 15, for marble, r. mantle
P. 146, l. 2, for like r. little
P. 149, l. 9, for leaves, r. leave
P. 185, l. 7, for even, r. ever
P. 187, l. 4, for buſtles, r. buſtle
P. 207, l. 2, for nappily, r. happily
P. 241, l. 2, for antideluvian, r. antediluvian
P. 256, l. 13, omit the period after buried.
P. 256, l. 18, for inertity, r. inanity.

THE

ERRORS of INNOCENCE.

LETTER LXVII.

To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mrs. Obrien.

Portland Place.

YOUR laſt* my deareſt friend cleared up a myſtery, which, tho' the perturbation of my mind prevented my noticing, ſunk deep in it—Shocked at the apparent probability of your ſuſpicions, I will yet confeſs to you, I was not ſufficiently ſtaggered to believe them; the character of Mr. Nugent, nay that of Lord Melroſs,

*Omitted.

let me add, ſo above a coarſe intrigue, ſo elevated alike in ſentiment and ſituation, were both too repugnant to the odious idea.

You accuſe me of leaving you in perplexity and terror; tenderly indeed, and ſoothingly, do you urge me to write oftener; if I do not, aſſure yourſelf it is becauſe I dread to encourage thoſe tumults of the mind, recollection muſt naturally give riſe to.—A fatal paſſion, my dear, has ſeized upon my heart, its wild and diffuſive waves have increaſed in proportion as its boundaries receded, and I tremble leſt every faculty ſhould be overwhelmed and loſt in it.—Abſence does not baniſh it, reaſon does not ſuppreſs it;—Oh why do they urge me to deſperation, and anguiſh! I had determined to be ſilent—Whilſt I had any joys, they were yours to participate; but why ſhould I ſadden you, by the recital of griefs, you cannot relieve? my hours of chearfulneſs (or rather ofconſtraint) are devoted

devoted to thoſe I do not love, and it would be ungenerous, to impart thoſe of ſorrow, where I do. Mr. Obrien and Mr. Davenport have met frequently : inſult, altercation, every thing that can ſhock, or, alarm me, has enſued between them— Why he cannot part with his Iriſh eſtate, and live on the income of my fortune, I am not able to learn ; or how he has accumulated debts ſo immenſe, as thoſe of which he ſpeaks. For Winbrook the purchaſe money has never, I find, been wholly laid down : the furniture is entirely unpaid for, and even the equipage, (by which he ridiculouſly ſet half London in arms) remains a memento, we muſt bluſh for : theſe extravagancies, I have in ſome degree contributed to, tho' innocently on the compariſon ; nor will my mind know a moment of peace, till ſuch accounts are ſettled ; and I have put every thing in train, that they may be ſo. That

Mr. Obrien gam'd, I always ſuſpected; but that his follies aroſe to ſo inordinate a pitch, was far, far beyond even my fears. They now amount to every thing terrible; and even thoſe inceſſant and long abſences, which would otherwiſe be a relief, fill me only with perplexity and dread. It is certain he does not always go to the gaming table. He returns often to dreſs; and does it with an exactneſs and elegance, that leave me no doubt he has ſome object in view. Some wretch whom, like myſelf, he has mark'd for his victim; to whom thoſe graces he is ſo ſtudious to cultivate, appear the genuine offspring of tenderneſs and merit! Oh! could I but know, how many pangs might I ſpare her! I need but look on her to ſpeak to her heart; the fears, the pity, the ſympathy, collected in my eyes, at ſight of ſuch a creature, muſt awaken all of hers. Like me, ſhe would then view that ſad futurity, which now perhaps,

preſents

preſents nothing but golden viſions;—and, from the wreck of *my* proſpects, learn more juſtly to eſtimate her own. But what do I ſay? Perhaps but too well known to her, the object by turns of her envy or diſguſt, ſhe pities the fate of the gay, the elegant libertine, whom fortune has match'd ſo unequally. —She is perſuaded ſhe could reform as a wife, the vices ſhe has not courage to cenſure as a woman; and voluntarily ſinks to that level, from which ſhe vainly flatters herſelf, the forms of a church would have enabled her to elevate him. Unacquainted with half Mr. Obrien's connexions, it is impoſſible I ſhould gueſs at her whom he purſues; nor, even if I could, ſhould I dare, perhaps, to interfere.—

I have ſeen Lady Almerſtone: Lady Maria is going to be married; and great preparations are making for the occaſion: yet I think ſhe looks pale, and I fear there is

more of obedience than love in her choice. Is it not the error of thofe parents, who are tenderly attentive to the education of their children, to confider them, when educated, as too much of the automaton? Form'd only by thofe principles and paffions, they have wifh'd to infpire, and equally dead with themfelves to any other? —This is I fear, the cafe of poor Lady Maria, who, accuftom'd to live under the ftrict eye of a mother, and with only a moderate underftanding, perfuades herfelf fhe has taftes, cuftoms, and difgufts, which are only imbib'd; and which her firft intercourfe with the world, will probably efface.—She has receiv'd, not form'd her opinions; and, fhould caprice, fafhion, or artifice, once attempt the fuperftructure, there will be no foundation left, on which to rebuild it. I have feen too, Mifs Sutherland.—She call'd on me twice; but it was not the Mifs Sutherland I had formerly

feen.

ſeen. Thoſe different points of view, in which we now behold each other, ill-calculate us for companions. She has once more aſſum'd her reign in the world.—Since the propoſals of Lord Melroſs have been made, Lady Somerſet has ſeem'd ambitious of giving her that diſtinction, ſhe will ſoon be entitled to claim.—She is heard of every where, admir'd every where; but ſhe forgets that ſhe is to be belov'd by any but him. I muſt viſit her once before the great event takes place, or incur obſervations I ſhould tremble at: nor ſhall I long delay the compliment, tho' it is now, I muſt confeſs, ſome time ſince we have view'd each other with the ſame pleaſure we once felt. From the hour when Miſs Sutherland made herſelf the voluntary object of attention to Lord Melroſs, I was ſenſible of a diſguſt, for which, I at firſt ſeverely condemn'd my own heart. Reflection however, diminiſh'd my ſelf-reproach.—The apparent delicacy and

generoſity with which ſhe interpos'd *her* name to reſcue mine from diſgrace, became a ſubject of doubt, inſtead of gratitude, when I recollected that ſhe made me feel all the *neceſſity*, of ſuch an interpoſition; and that too, at a period when I was obviouſly overwhelm'd with anguiſh, and anxiety. The ſame means which ſecur'd my reputation, *with* my concurrence, might have done ſo without it; and let me add, (tho' I may perhaps incur the cenſure of malevolence, or envy) that there was a certain air of readineſs, and gayety, in her conduct on the occaſion, that made her rather appear to *take* an advantage than to give it.—Perhaps I may be wrong: I feel ſo conſcious of being liable to the ſuſpicion, that even to you, I have been fearful of divulging my ſentiments; it was not however poſſible to ſuppreſs them: and when I recollect, how ſolicitous Lady Somerſet and

Janetta

Janetta were to accompliſh this alliance, I cannot but think they ſometimes voluntarily increas'd my fears of cenſure, in order to make me an inſtrument in their views. Nay, that they even dup'd Mr. Obrien into the ſame, if I may judge by his actions, which ſo ſtrangely coincided with theirs, on many occaſions, that nothing but an over-agitated heart, could have prevented my noticing it. But why refer to thoſe painful events, at which my very ſoul ſtill ſickens? their views, even if accompliſh'd by a degree of artifice, were ſtill ſufficiently juſtifiable.— Without the power of adding to my own happineſs, I interfered with theirs; and had I been weak enough to have purſued the ſame line of conduct, I had then enter'd upon, it would not have been long in my power to decide, how far the attachment between Lord Melroſs and myſelf, might have been carried. Deceiv'd by the dangerous pleaſure of ſeeing, and

converſing with him daily, I had ſunk the hopeleſſneſs of my ſituation, in the mere gratification of the moment: and in that vortex, might have buried my honor, with my reaſon, had not ſome remains of the latter, interſered to reſcue me. Incautious is the woman who truſts in ſuch a ſituation to eſteem: it is the gaudy mantle in which the infant love, is wrapt, and which only ſerves to attract our eyes, from the object it conceals. By retrieving the firſt error, a thouſand future were ſpar'd me; perhaps a fatal one; ſince I know too well, the weakneſs of human nature, not to feel that every ſucceeding frailty, prepares us for another; and every error, ſtrengthens the temptation to vice. From temptation however, I am now forever excluded, both by fortune and choice.— The ſhaft is nevertheleſs, not yet extracted from my heart: that weak, that erring heart, which could almoſt regret, the privation of its miſeries.

How

How is my ſweet boy? Thank Lady Ameſbury for the honor ſhe did me in becoming my ſubſtitute. Perhaps on the great occaſion of Miſs Sutherland's wedding, I may once more have the happineſs of embracing my beloved friend.

S. OBRIEN.

LETTER LXVIII.

To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mrs. Obrien.

Portland-Place, Dec.

AFTER having ſurviv'd ſo many wounds, I have at length received one, which it will require ages to heal, and that from the hand of her whom I once call'd my friend. It is Lady Somerſet, it is the nominal mother of the moſt indulgent of her ſex, who inſults me by her ſuſpicions. Gracious Heavens! of what materials do they imagine me compos'd! —Do theſe features carry the ſtamp of inſenſibility! Does this frame, which withers every hour, denote a heart capable of enduring trials ſo ſevere? She has diſcover'd that I love; thoſe tears that have flow'd from my heart, have reflected its emotions; and yet ſhe can bid me be

happy.

happy. Let her *teach* me to be ſo:—alas, ſhe cannot: the meaneſt individual has the power of invading our tranquillity, but few indeed, are the diſtinguiſh'd beings who can add to it.

Having heard accidentally that Lord Melroſs was gone to Mount-Herbert, I ſent a card to Spenſer-Houſe, and (to avoid the appearance of a coldneſs, which after their reſidence in mine would have been ſingular,) invited myſelf to dinner; I receiv'd a note in anſwer, from Miſs Sutherland, in which ſhe aſſur'd me, ſhe had been ſo much indiſpos'd by a cold, that ſhe could hardly have receiv'd any other company, but if I would do her the honor of coming *en famille*, Lady Somerſet and herſelf would be happy to ſee me. —I thought I was fortunate, in an opportunity of diſpenſing with that from, my mind was but little inclin'd to, and accepted the conditions. The ladies were

both

both in the dreſſing-room; but with ceremony they indeed had diſpens'd, for it was a ſcene of ſtudied confuſion, which I had rarely beheld. A profuſion of ſilks, trimmings, and even jewels, lay ſcatter'd around. Lady Somerſet was looking at ſome point, and Miſs Sutherland reading a magazine, in a rich undreſs, which ſerv'd the lap-dog to repoſe on. I apologiz'd for intruding too ſoon, in order to convince them of an impropriety on their part, which they poſſibly did not think I ſhould have courage to obſerve. Miſs Sutherland alſo apologiz'd for her dreſs; which, as it was every thing *but* dreſs, was ſurely a weak oſtentation. My opinion was then aſk'd upon the ornaments that were before me, and our diſcuſſions on them fully engroſs'd us till the hour of dinner. I would not be thought captious, but Janetta, my dear, will be truly the fine lady. With the fineſt bloom, the moſt perfect brilliance in her eyes, ſhe

talk'd

talk'd of her nerves, her *ennui*, and the long, long lift of fashionable complaints. Lady Somerset retir'd for a short time in the evening, in order, as she said, to give audience to the trade's-people, whose patterns had been left in the morning.—Janetta and I had been about an hour *tête à tête*, and were sitting on the sopha together, when we heard a carriage drive up to the gate.—She said, it was Lord Spenser.—I would it had been so! but an evil star prevail'd; for at almost the same moment, the door was open'd for Lord Melross.—He enter'd hastily, and in undress; yet not expecting to see me it was plain; for he started, colour'd, pass'd her, who had advanc'd to meet him, and taking my hand, colder at that moment than death, utter'd some inarticulate but impassion'd expressions of his happiness on the meeting. I turn'd from him, to her, with terror and anxiety; but good Heavens, the powerful haughtiness

of

of her eye, can never I think, be effac'd from *my* memory, or perhaps his, had he ſeen it. It was a momentary glance however, for it clos'd inſtantaneouſly, and an extreme paleneſs overſpread her whole face.—I cannot tell you what I felt.—A ſort of frantic emotion ſeem'd to take poſſeſſion of my heart; my only wiſh, or hope, was to fly, and forcibly withdrawing my hand, I hardly knew I had left the room, before I found myſelf, as if by impulſe, again in that we had quitted to dine, where Lady Somerſet was talking, while her woman arrang'd the ornaments; the former enquir'd, with exceſſive ſurpriſe, the cauſe of my emotion; for I was in tears: nor could I make her any other anſwer, than that Miſs Sutherland was ill, and Lord Melroſs was below. Imagine the moſt freezing expreſſion, it is poſſible the features of a woman can convey, and you will have ſome idea of hers.—After a moment's pauſe,

"You

"You have explain'd the whole affair, Madam," ſaid ſhe, "in one word; and I am only ſorry you have not done it more to my ſatisfaction, and your own credit."

Without adding a ſyllable to me, ſhe bad her woman follow her, and left the room with a hauteur that exceeds all deſcription. Diſtracted as I was with a thouſand griefs, I yet could not be inſenſible to ſuch an inſult, and it added a more poignant anguiſh, to that I already endur'd. Abandon'd as I ſeem'd by the world, its punctilios faded into nothing. Careleſs who were the witneſſes, I ſigh'd, I wept, nay, I even groan'd. I look'd in vain for you, in an apartment where I had ſeen you ſo often; and ſhed ſtill bitterer tears on ſeeking you in vain. Almoſt half an hour elaps'd from the departure of Lady Somerſet, and no one had been near, no one had enquir'd after me. I ſeem'd an alien from creation. I grew

at

at length more collected, and resolv'd to return to that melancholy home, which serv'd but to perpetuate the sorrows it shelter'd, and rung to give orders.—Lady Somerset enter'd.

"You rung I think Madam!"

"I will trouble your Ladyship, to bid your servants ask if mine are waiting."—

"They have done so: but you appear too much indispos'd to go immediately."

"I am not indeed very well! but to be an intruder, is ever disagreeable, especially upon those Madam, who do not even conceal that they think me such."

"The reasons for my conduct Mrs. Obrien, cannot be unknown to you: and tho' I pity your agitation, I still more pity the cause."

"And what action of my life, has degraded me into being an object of your pity Madam? A sentiment we are but little inclin'd

inclin'd to inſpire in the moſt delicate minds; much leſs in ſuch as infuſe into it a mixture of contempt."

"You talk very haughtily, Mrs. Obrien! but allow me to tell you, that I thought both my rank, and time of life, would have exempted me from being ſo anſwer'd by the upſtart companion of Lady Helen. I have been an obſerver of your conduct, and I cannot avoid hinting to you, that a *prudent* woman, might have choſen a more humble connexion than with Lord Melroſs"—

"Good Heavens!" interrupted I, riſing with unconquerable agitation; "an obſerver upon my conduct! and is it for ſuch, to judge, or cenſure it!—Such! to whom fortune is the ſtandard of merit; who incapable of conceiving any attachments, but the frivolous ones of convenience, or the worſe of guilt, are as far from the power of imagining, as feeling, the ſenſations of warm and active hearts.

Be

Be assur'd Lady Somerset, our sentiments are too distinct, ever to interfere with each other.—Lord Melrose is your relation, your intimate; you see in him a nobleman whose rank and fortune, by placing him on an equality with yourself in the eye of the world, would atone for every innate defect"——

"These slights, Mr. Obrien, are neither becoming your character, or situation.—You are a young woman, a handsome woman:—a *very* handsome woman! I don't mean to disparage you, in order to raise my niece; she wants no foil."

"Beauty, Madam! name it not to me! it was surely the undiscoverable mark set on the children of Cain, by which they were render'd the outcasts of society!"—

"You were thrown early into life, your *suppos'd* fortune, and expensive mode of life, attracted notice. These are palliations

ations I confeſs; eſpecially when we remember Mr. Obrien is a gay man;"

"A *gay* man, madam!"

"But he is very good-natured! every body ſays he is very good natured; and that I dare ſay *your friend* Lady Helen, by this time thinks no inconſiderable advantage in a huſband.—However ſhe has made her own fate. Her folly be on her head, for Lord Somerſet and I have done with her."

"And happy, I am proud to ſay, as ſhe deſerves it ſhould be, is that fate! but can you Madam, be ſo unjuſt to the choice of Lady Helen, or the merits of Mr. Nugent, as to impeach a felicity you cannot beſtow? What charm! what infatuation is there in wealth and diſtinction, that thus blinds the eyes of its votaries!"

"My niece I hope, however, will reſtore the luſtre of the family!"

"It is now my turn, Lady Somerſet, to pity, (and greatly do I indeed) the weakneſs

weakneſs of thoſe, who ſee nothing in their children, but their titles and eſtates perſonified. Valuing external advantages thus highly madam, you would have been too vain had you been equally ſenſible of the internal ones of the daughter you acquir'd."—

"I am not at leiſure to diſpute upon girliſh friendſhips, tho' Lady Helen was perhaps indebted to them for her romance. —Let us return to our firſt ſubject—your connexion with Lord Melroſs."—

"*My connexion*, Madam, with Lord Melroſs! And who has dar'd to inſinuate I have any?"

"Nay, Mrs. Obrien, if you retract your own words, I can have nothing to ſay.— I meant to have advis'd you.—Did you not a few moments ago, infer,—nay, I bluſh for you,—did you not even talk of your *attachments*?"

"Bluſh for *me* Madam! bluſh rather for yourſelf! bluſh for thoſe worldly ideas which

which made you misconstrue a comparison of the most innocent and chastest sentiments, into a criminal confession.—You oppress! you overwhelm me, Lady Somerset. You add insult to misfortune, and when I sink under the load, you cruelly term it guilt.—Surely never was lot so singular as mine! fated to want every consolation, I see myself depriv'd of all. Beat down like a flower by successive storms, the gay tints of youth and fortune, are defac'd to one melancholy mass.—Oh! what then am I Madam, to give either you or Miss Sutherland uneasiness?—Could I ever have rivall'd her; is it with this faded person, and more faded mind? This fetter'd hand, and harrass'd constitution, where grief has already done, what time had deferr'd; it is become the ruling expression of every feature; it rises in my eyes, it mingles with my actions, it speaks in my voice: I am not blind to the change, absorb'd in its own tears, my

heart

heart expands to imbibe the corroding moiſture which deſtroys it, and cloſes with diſguſt againſt every other relief."—

Loſt in my feelings, and drown'd indeed in tears, I ſunk from my ſeat upon the ground, and reſted my head upon the ſopha. I ſaid more, much more; but do not remember what. I believe I was hyſterical, for they gave me drops ſeveral times, and I hardly recollect how I got home. My conſtitution, has, I fear, receiv'd a ſhock, it will not eaſily get over, for I have been very ill ever ſince.—Yet I *muſt* ſtruggle, I *muſt* appear. May my prayers and tears aſcend to that being, who only can fulfil the one, or dry up the other; and may he give me courage and virtue, to ſupport the evils he inflicts.

* * * * * * * * *

I have been reading myſelf into a calmer frame of mind.—Shall I ſearch, (as

I often anxiouſly do) into the boſom of futurity, for the *misfortunes* it may add to, and not look to the bleſſings it may offer? In the intoxication of frivolous and deluſive pleaſures, how often do we ſuffer the ſanguine heart to expand over chimeras? And ought we not more juſtly to indulge its viſions, when accumulated evils, give us a ſort of privilege to hope for a merciful alleviation? Much is to be done, where we reſolve to do it. I have thought ſo for others, and will now think ſo for myſelf. You will believe me ſincere in this ſpecies of philoſophy, when I recount to you the hard trial I muſt have undergone, in liſtening to the circumſtances, which brought Lord Melroſs ſo ſuddenly from Mount-Herbert. Letters have been deliver'd to him, by Captain Erſkine's Lawyer, which ſpeak of his early return to England, (his health being much mended) with the intention of conteſting the titles and eſtates of the late

Lord Melroſs, and proceedings have been actually commenc'd. I could not help obſerving to Sir George, (what is obvious to every one) that the delay of ſuch a ſuit, was too ſingular, not to give us an indifferent opinion of the cauſe. Erſkine's account of the matter, is however, reaſonable and conſiſtent enough. The letters which mention the death of the old Lord, were ſent to him at Montpelier, where, after lying ſome time at the Poſt-Houſe, they were forwarded to Naples, from whence they once more travell'd to England, from a falſe idea that he was gone thither by ſea; having been order'd by his Phyſicians to ſail for a few weeks. The news at laſt reach'd him, by accident, at Rome; nor did the letters return to confirm it, till ſome time after; upon which, he immediately wrote thoſe, which have juſt been receiv'd. Lord Melroſs came immediately to Lord Somerſet, to make him the offer of poſtponing the al-

liance,

liance, till the affair was determin'd; but this the family have had delicacy enough to decline; and it will probably only be a motive for haſtening it, as his preſence will be neceſſary in Scotland. Sir George tells me Lord Melroſs has nothing to fear for the event. Surely there can be nothing. Yet it is a diſagreeable idea; and the more ſo, as it will oblige him to expoſe many domeſtic occurrences, equally wounding to his pride, and his delicacy. Alas! how variouſly, and ſtrangely is the lot of mortality embitter'd, even to the moſt proſperous.——Adieu, my dear Friend.

S. O.

LETTER LXIX.

To Mrs. Obrien—From Lady Helen Nugent.

Mulberry-Mount, Dec.

HOW much am I ſhock'd, my deareſt Sophia, that you ſhould receive either neglect or inſult, from any part of my family. But why repeat to you uſeleſs conſolations, which I muſt even borrow from yourſelf? For where ſhall I find nobler, or juſter precepts, than thoſe your own boſom affords!—You too well know the haughty, the uncontroulable temper of Lady Somerſet. Did it not keep her a ſingle woman, (tho' with brilliant offers) till paſt the bloom of life, becauſe the falſe idea of her own diſtinguiſh'd birth, made her look down with contempt, even on thoſe families half England looks up to? She enter'd ours only to make my father

ther, (what nature never made him,) a ſtateſman without ſkill, and a courtier without policy. Till then, he was ſatisfied with a private opinion, and a public vote; ſince that time, he has dreamt of nothing but poſts, penſions, and privy councils; his health has been impair'd by forming ſchemes, and his peace deſtroy'd by their diſappointment. She became earneſt to make Spenſer a politician: he turn'd out firſt a jockey, then a fop. I was to be a beauty; marry half a dozen Dukes, and be a peereſs in my own right. Unfortunately I thought happineſs as valuable, as the privilege of ſending two or three footmen before me to St. James's. All her hopes now centre in Lord Melroſs and Janetta; the high rank of the one, and the beauty of the other, juſtify her moſt ambitious projects. She hates every body that interferes with either, and has long conſider'd you as a dangerous rival. So cruel, ſo unmerited a ſucceſſion of inſults

however, as thoſe your laſt converſation affords, I did not ſuppoſe her capable of offering. Oh! ſhe knew you well, or policy would have ſilenc'd her at this criſis. For policy has long ſilenc'd her. In ſhort my dear, (for why ſhould I diſſemble a truth ſo apparent?) you are the object of a rooted jealouſy, and diſguſt, which I have vainly endeavour'd, by turns to conceal, or ſuppreſs. Without ſenſibility to judge of your feelings, or delicacy to calculate how far they might affect your conduct, ſhe had often penetration enough to dive into them. You have offended her pride by an air of *éclat* in your introduction into life, and with her views, by attaching that branch of her own family, whoſe honors and fortunes ſhe had determin'd to appropriate. She has found herſelf under the neceſſity of diſſembling the one, in order to make you an inſtrument for ſeconding the other; and that very ne-

ceſſity,

ceſſity, was a mortification which enſur'd you her hatred. It is not to be concealed, that Janetta with many natural advantages, has nevertheleſs a thouſand draw-backs in ſituation, which have ever render'd her rather admir'd, than ſought: and I have the utmoſt reaſon to ſuppoſe, (tho' it has been a ſecret carefully kept) that no poſitive offer has hitherto been made, in any ſhape ſo advantageous as that from Lord Melroſs. The dolls of the day, my dear Sophia, alone know how many *adore*, to one that *propoſes*. My mother's pride, her temper, and the enemies both have made her amidſt the moſt diſtinguiſh'd families, with thoſe ſhe has oblig'd my father to make in politics, have render'd her alliance very undeſirable. Miſs Sutherland has no fortune, but that which may be beſtow'd, and it will therefore, moſt probable be very inconſiderable. That ſhe can *ſpend* one, the world has already diſcover'd; and, (ſhould

her novelty wear off,) with all the charms ſhe really poſſeſſes, ſhe would ſtand the chance of giving way to a more faſhionable face. Thoſe objections ſo powerful with the reſt of the world, do not hold good with Lord Melroſs. He is already allied to Lady Somerſet; he has a noble eſtate, and, like moſt men, would gratify his vanity when he cannot his heart, by chuſing a woman deſirable to others; he has been told ſhe has a partiality *for*, and knows ſhe is in ſome meaſure dependent *on* him. Many circumſtances have united to *make* the match, and one only can croſs it. Oh, how amiable, how generous, is that character, which, under ſuch temptations, interferes not voluntarily, with the views of thoſe, by whom it has been wrong'd. A word, a breath, a thought of yours, might perhaps, even now, deſtroy the expectations of my mother and Janetta, and render both the objects of his everlaſting averſion. But

that

that breath would ſully the purity of a mind yet untainted; that word would incur a remorſe, which the ſweets either of love, or revenge, would be unequal to ſubduing. *You* have wept, my beloved Sophia; but it is ſhe who has been debas'd: peace, virtue, gentleneſs, every ſofter grace, will bloom freſher from your tears, whilſt the wild tumults of her temper, have ſwept them all hence. I am perſuaded ſhe thought you threw yourſelf voluntarily in the way of Lord Melroſs, or ſhe would never have betray'd a warmth, ſhe herſelf will, on reflection, think *indiſcreet*. But ſuch is the powerful effects of an indulg'd error, that even for our own intereſt, we cannot always avoid it: it coſts us a thouſand painful efforts to conceal, and at laſt is diſcover'd by ſome mad ebullition, for which we muſt bluſh. I grieve I did not ſooner know your opinion of Janetta. Your confeſſi-

ons of her gayety on paſt occaſions, give me but too much cauſe to ſuſpect her of ſeconding Lady Somerſet's *manœuvres*. Involv'd as you were when at Winbrook, and miſerable as I was for you, (ſince your ſituation left me every thing to fear for your heart, and her Ladyſhip's aſperity, awaken'd all my apprehenſions for your character,) I muſt confeſs, I earneſtly deſired a union, I thought calculated to relieve the continual temptations of the one, or ſilence the ſpleen of the other.—But that wiſh never made me for a moment think lightly of the honor, or happineſs of Lord Melroſs, and could I ſuppoſe either endanger'd, it would awaken a deep and laſting chagrin. Oh fortune, fortune! how ſtrange, how capricious are thy fluctuations, which leave us hardly power to decide upon our own wiſhes;—This conſtant ſucceſſion of hope, doubt, and apprehenſion, which embitter'd my mind, during my mother's ſtay at Mulber-

ry-Mount,

ry-Mount, was the ſole cauſe of that aſperity in one of my letters, which you ſaid coſt you tears. Mine, believe me, had flow'd with anger and vexation; nor was I ſenſible (my mind being agitated) that I had written ſo warmly.

Your idèa that the celebration would be rather haſten'd, than impeded, by the circumſtances of Erſkines return, was perfectly juſt. His litigation with Lord Melroſs, (according to the letters I have receiv'd,) is regarded as a mad ſcheme, his fortune will not allow him to purſue, as he has little beſides his commiſſion; and an early day in February, it is expected, will be fix'd upon for the wedding.— Edward and I have had our invitations in due form; for which I cannot but ſuppoſe we are indebted to Lord Melroſs; ſince it is to be in too ſplendid a ſtyle, to allow of our being admitted from *choice*.— The wiſh I feel to ſee you, and the re-

ſpect due to his Lordſhip, have induc'd us to accept the compliment, tho' I mean to feign an indiſpoſition, which may detain me from being preſent on the day, and follow Mr. Nugent, when the buſtle is over. If you have not yet ſeen Lord Melroſs, ſince your unfortunate *rencontre* at Spenſer-Houſe I confeſs, I could wiſh that you did: ſince the longer your meeting is deferr'd, the more diſtreſſing it will prove; and you will be under the neceſſity of viſiting Janetta hereafter, tho' even *I* will not adviſe you again to be Lady Somerſet's gueſt.

Edward has this moment receiv'd letters to haſten our journey. The day is precipitated to the 25th of January; as Lord Melroſs muſt unavoidably be in Scotland ſoon after. Mr. Nugent will ſhortly be in town, and will wait upon you immediately.——Adieu, my dear Sophia.

phia.—Your god-ſon is grateful for your enquiries, and will live, I hope, to be ſenſible of their value, as is moſt truly his mother, and

Your ſincere friend,

H. NUGENT.

LET-

LETTER LXX.

To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mrs. Obrien.

Portland-Place, Jan.

THE meeting for which you kindly advise me to be prepar'd, my dear, is past. It was accomplish'd as I could wish; by accident, and in public! and is a weight off my mind, it was ill-calculated to support.

I told you I *must* dress, I *must* appear. I did so; and, amongst other places, was at the Theatre. I saw Lady Somerset's livery in the opposite box, which prepar'd me for the occasion; a very splendid party enter'd; I suppos'd from Spenser-House, tho' her ladyship was not amongst them. Lord Melross led in Miss Sutherland,

Sutherland, elegantly dreſt, and looking more charming, than I had ever ſeen her. —Thoſe truly fine eyes, wander'd over every object, with a conſciouſneſs of beauty, that increas'd the glow upon her cheek. Alas! ſigh'd my heart,

— — "Can ſhe know,
What 'tis to love,—and not know ſorrow too?"

On their reconnoitring the audience, an interchange of compliments enſued; and the ladies making a motion for Lord Melroſs to ſit between them, he comply'd; but our eyes often met: voluntarily on my part; ſince to have avoided it, (ſituated as we were,) would have had a much more ſtudied appearance. At the end of the ſecond act, we ſeem'd to have read each other's countenances ſufficiently; and, as he quitted their box, I doubted not but we ſhould ſee him in ours; which I did the next moment. It was not then

eaſy

easy to approach me; for we were very full.—But, as he has always friends amongst the ladies, by bowing to one, smiling on another, and talking to a third, he contriv'd to gain ground. He paid me his compliments with an air of peculiar respect, and regretted that he had not been fortunate enough to find me at home (where indeed I was both times) when he left his name at Portland-Place; said nothing of my health, (a delicacy, I could not but esteem him for, since my alter'd looks, from my last indisposition, render it the constant topic of all who address me,) but enter'd upon the trifles of the day, with his usual agreeableness. I was collected and easy; I had determin'd I would be so, and for the first time for an age past, was satisfied with myself. The drawing up of the curtain warn'd him to depart; and I purposely outstaid them to a part of the entertainment. Thus have we not begun well, my dear? Your presence,

ſence, and your ſupport, will I doubt not, enable us to purſue the ſame plan. Miſs Sutherland, will make him happy, and the conſciouſneſs of rectitude, will, I hope, render me ſo.

I had heard that the celebration was to take place on the 25th. All the world talk of it. Our party diſcuſs'd nothing elſe at the play; and they were ſo loud about it in the next box, I thought the voices muſt reach acroſs the houſe.

* * * * * * * * *

Mr. Nugent, has this morning been here. I really threw myſelf into his arms with pleaſure. He was not ſo ungallant as to reject me, tho' I believe he had no ſuch tender intention. He gives me the beſt accounts of you: ſays you are more blooming than a Hebé, and a thouſand times more agreeable than ever. I can-

not

not however, find out, which your dear boy resembles. These men are always dull on such occasions. Even your Edward, (tho' a fond father I assure you) hardly knows yet, whether his son has two eyes, or one. When he can run alone, Mr. Nugent will begin to know him better. We have been talking over Mr. Obrien's quarrel with Davenport: the former has again been urgent to lessen the principal of my fortune, if it cannot be withdrawn. If this scheme can be accomplish'd to relieve him, my consent shall not be wanting; and Mr. N— has undertaken to talk with Davenport, but says the affair requires caution.

S. O.

LET-

LETTER LXXI.

To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mr. Nugent.

Grosvenor-Square, Jan.

AFTER a fatiguing ride, thro' heavy roads, splash'd to the shoulders, and drown'd in rain, I have at length, my dear, reach'd Grosvenor-Square. Lord Melrose was not at home; therefore equipping myself a little, (and only a little) more, *comme il faut*, I march'd off, to pay my respects to Mrs. Obrien. What shall I tell you of your friend? You intreat me to be minute.—She is much alter'd; but there is a period in the withering of those really lovely, where the lingering disease may be said,

"To *give* more beauties, than it takes away."

The bloom of youth and happiness, is plainly fading; but a tender humility, a softness,

ſoftneſs, that ſpeaks in that ſmile which only marks the utter extinction of chearfulneſs, is, to me, a more intereſting expreſſion, than any, youth, or vivacity, can beſtow. My heart, my dear, has a ſtrange ſympathy with yours. I embrac'd her with an ardor that would have tempted a ſtranger to ſmile, and after a converſation of two hours, return'd to Groſvenor-Square. And now ſay you, "another deſcription." How look'd my Lord?—No, my dear good girl, it will not be. I have invok'd all the Gods, but none will befriend me, where my own ſex are concern'd. "How did he look," ſay you? Why his noſe, (to the beſt of my recollection) ſtands where it did; his mouth too, is, I believe, in its uſual poſition, and his eyes, (having nothing to regale themſelves with, but a clumſy fellow of five-foot ten) did not vary greatly in their expreſſion, from what I have formerly ſeen. We ſhook hands, talk'd over old

affairs;

affairs; breath'd a few ſighs for our abſent divinities, and then betook ourſelves to thoſe leſs coy ones, who ſeem'd inclin'd to pay us a viſit: namely to Somnus, and his old friend Morpheus, who, (if he was as kind to his Lordſhip, as to me) brought thoſe ſame divinities whoſe abſence I have mention'd, not only to his eyes, but to his arms.

In the morning we went to Spenſer-Houſe. And now once more, muſt I invoke the Nine, to delineate the matur'd charms, of the all-powerful Lady Somerſet. —Imagine however, you ſee them lighted up with a few of thoſe roſes, which the ignorant, and the vulgar, have yclep'd damaſk; and which have been often obſerved to cover the cheeks of this amiable lady, when ſhe is oblig'd to pronounce the word *Sir:* a term, which (having long extremely offended the delicacy of her organs) ſhe is always impatient to exchange

for,

for, *my Lord*, or *your Grace*.—Imagine in ſhort, ſuch an ungracious *no*-welcome, as you have ſometimes ſeen, and you will form a competent idea of mine. That I receiv'd from Lord Somerſet was generous, and kind. Miſs Sutherland's haughtily condeſcending, till ſhe found the eye of Lord Melroſs was upon her, when ſhe dimpled into ſmiles, that would have tempted you to forget that it was poſſible ſhe ſhould be haughty. We din'd there. Lord Melroſs was polite, attentive: not gay, yet light enough to pleaſe: not tender, yet aſſiduous enough to flatter: in ſhort, every thing that could ſeduce and touch a cold heart, or wound an impaſſion'd one. —Such is not Miſs Sutherland's. When we went home, he told me, he had ſeen Mrs. Obrien at the play, and ſpoke in high terms of the conſtraint he had put upon himſelf, in addreſſing her with indifference. Spoke, as he ever does when not miſled, with energy and frankneſs,

upon

upon all his feelings; assuring me he had not enter'd thus far into engagements with Janetta, without having thoroughly examin'd his heart, as to the probability of its being wholly hers. That he saw in Mrs. Obrien a thousand charms, and had been convinc'd by her conduct, that she possess'd a thousand merits: that to the first he had inclin'd to render both himself and her a victim, had not the second stepped in to save both.—In short, his whole conversation was that of a rational and ingenuous mind, except where *Mr.* Obrien was concern'd. *There* he was invariable in seeing nothing but the husband, and argued accordingly. That perfection however, which views every object unbiass'd, by the circumstances that attend it, is a step, I fear, above human nature.—Even Lord Melross, (and I think as highly of him, as of any man I have ever known,) was not superior to this weakness; his understanding, his heart, and his principles

ples equally revolt against *him* who once dup'd all. He despises him from reason; he does more from impulse, for he has once lov'd him; and tho' still ignorant of the greatest blot in his life, is sufficiently sensible of the depravity and weakness of his general conduct. Every thing is now in preparation for the day of days, when expect again to hear, from

Your faithful and affectionate,

EDWARD NUGENT.

LET-

LETTER LXXII.

To Edward Nugent, Esq.—From Lady Helen Nugent.

Mulberry-Mount, Jan.

A Poſt has elaps'd ſince the 25th, without bringing me a letter; what am I to conclude from your ſilence? Surely ſomething extraordinary muſt have been the cauſe; a thouſand vague fears, (I had almoſt ſaid hopes) croud upon my mind. I dare not write to Mrs. Obrien, leſt ſhe ſhould have any ſhare in it; and cannot but accuſe you of neglect, whatever the event, in not letting me know it. I have ſent to the Poſt-houſe twice in vain, and now (for the third time) have diſpatch'd that walking may-pole, Peter; determin'd if poſſible no blunder ſhall ariſe.—Ah, pardon my impatience, dear Edward!—I

ſee Peter's rueful phyſiognomy, as he ſtalks up to the gate, packet in hand, "innocent of thought," his aukwardly powdered red locks, plaited up behind, to reſemble a wiſp of hay half cover'd with a hoar froſt, and his little odd three corner'd hat, ſtuck on the extremity of his head, like a weather-cock on a ſteeple.—Leſs whiſtling, dear Peter, and more haſte. Ah, that packet! how do I burn to ſee its contents!

LET-

LETTER LXXIII.

To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mr. Nugent.

Mount-Herbert, Jan.

FROM bowing, courteſying, complimenting, and dreſſing, in a word, from all the ceremonies of a modern union, I have at length, ſtolen an hour, to devote to one of the heart; to congratulate myſelf, to ſympathize with my friend, and to pity all the reſt of the world. How differently were thoſe hours beſtow'd, when *we* adjur'd the Almighty, to witneſs a union doubly bleſt, both in love and religion; when our hearts, like the different ſtrings of an inſtrument, touch'd by the ſame powerful hand, vibrated in concert; when peace, reſerve, and delicacy,—but why mention paſt felicity, when every hour but ſtrengthens, and increaſes it. How is my beſt beloved, and my ſweet boy?

If one is well, I know the other will be ſo, and wait impatiently for the confirmation.—

The great day, you will ſee by my date, is paſt; gayly, at leaſt.—But a deſcription you cry! that perpetual demand of your ſex, which ours never know how to fulfil. Have patience, however; I am going to make an eſſay of my talents.—Suppoſe I write it dramatically; yet no; unleſs, like Congreve, I could make my fools, wits, or bid fring'd hangings, and gilt luſtres, hold a converſation, the moſt copious part of my ſubject, muſt be wholly laid aſide. On the 25th Lord Melroſs and I breakfaſted peaceably together in the ſtudy, where we had an earneſt converſation. I found his mind much more agitated, than I had ſuppos'd it could be, on an occaſion he ſo long had expected.—He endeavour'd to laugh it off, even with me; but the conſtant fluſh of his cheek,

the

the wandering of his eye, thoſe reſtleſs emotions, and long abſences of mind, every action betray'd, made me but too ſenſible he was not happy. Our *real* breakfaſt over, we dreſt to take a nominal one at Spenſer-Houſe; and Miſs Sutherland, by making her appearance, gave a point to the attentions, the thoughts, the aſſiduities of our friend, which once more reſtor'd him to himſelf. The breakfaſt was elegant; about twenty were invited.—Lord and Lady Somerſet both there: Lady Somerſet the directreſs of the whole, watch'd over the fair Queen of the feſtival, whom fancy had been exhauſted to adorn; and exquiſitely lovely ſhe appeared. Flowers, muſic, every ornament incident to a public breakfaſt, was heightened to profuſion; the men were all gallant, the women all animated. Rank was almoſt equal; for none had been admitted, myſelf excepted, who were not entitled to mingle any where: and *my Lord, Sir*

Thomas, your Grace, your Excellency, grew ſo familiar to the lips of this noble party, that I was near being dubb'd a *Right Honorable* half a dozen times in the courſe of the day, without any other pretenſion to the title, than that of having endeavour'd to deſerve it. To the Duke de Limoges indeed, I believe I was for ſome time an object of much wonder. The epithet of *Sir*, not at all agreeing with his ideas on ſeeing the Hero of the day, hang upon my arm. It was fixt we ſhould dine at Mount-Herbert, and the morning's amuſement being at an end, for that place we ſet off. Our party was there conſiderably increas'd, and a *ſuite* of apartments thrown open to receive them. Two card rooms, a ball-room, and a muſic-room, all newly hung, ſplendidly illuminated, and adorn'd with every thing modern luxury invents, or ſupplies, made no contemptible appearance, when the gay groups

of

of both ſexes were ſcatter'd irregularly round them: the women, in the fantaſtical elegance of half dreſs, rouged into Hebes: the men in their own opinion no leſs killing. But the *coup d'œil* was really beautiful, when the dinner apartments were thrown open. They crown'd the perſpective with a ſhrubbery of the lightest and moſt fanciful nature. A profuſion of every thing expenſive, cover'd the table, wreathes of flowers were mingled with the ornaments of cut glaſs and ſilver, and feſtoons of the ſame, with little lamps of chryſtal thrown over the lemon colour'd hangings, which by their lightneſs, reliev'd the palm, and orange trees, below. The muſic inſtantly paus'd, and a moment after play'd a ſofter, and more ſprightly air. —In a word, it was the banquet of Calypſo: every eye ſparkled, and every voice was modulated to pleaſure. And what is there wanting? ſaid I, looking round. I fixed on Lord Melroſs; nothing, but *happineſs*.

—Insensible to the brilliant spectacle that was before him, he was leaning on the back of Lady Georgina Fortescue's chair, his eyes fixt in reverie, and every sense collected to his heart. He wak'd as from a dream, by the tumult around him, smiled to conceal that he was not gay, sigh'd at having smiled, and started forward, to flatter, and to dissemble. We now all hastily prest to the table. The little goddess who was to adorn it, was officiously follow'd by a thousand powder'd fops, emulous of her notice; whose audible whispers increas'd the glow of exultation, which already suffus'd her cheek. Lord Melross for awhile exerted himself, as he ever does at his own table. But his eye often strain'd thro' the glare of light, to look on her with a thoughtful intentness, and found, I fear, too much *ton*, to gratify his heart. Too easy, too elegant, too much like herself, she indeed smil'd on him with all the softness of love; but it was not

with

with that diſtinguiſhing and timid love, which bluſhes at the gaze it ſolicits, and ſeems to mark its object, as the centre, and the inſpirer of every pleaſure that ſurrounds it.

On riſing from dinner the ball was open'd: many minuets, and a few cotillons were danc'd, after which, we broke into parties. A cold collation was ſpread in the eating rooms, where the doors were once more thrown open, after every ornament had been varied there. The ceremony had been read at the uſual time in the evening, and muſic, gayety and cards, concluded it.—And now, have I not well perform'd my taſk? It is true that in the ardor of my deſcription, I had almoſt forgot to marry them: but this is a venial overſight; and perhaps, had the good Biſhop been guilty of the ſame, Lord Melroſs would not have lik'd him the worſe. But now to the tra-

gical part of the buſineſs. On aſſembling in the morning to breakfaſt, two of the party were deficient, about whom ſome enquiries began to be made; and the face of Lord Somerſet was a little overcaſt, as will be that of his fair daughter, when I add, that one was Lord Spenſer. Miſtake not, however; neither ſword or piſtol were in queſtion; but a certain ſmall weapon, call'd a dart; which, however dangerous in the hands of the ancient Cupids, has been found to be perfectly harmleſs, in thoſe of our modern ones, and ſeldom indeed to pierce more than ſkin deep. With one of theſe implements, ſkilfully thrown from the eyes of the fair Lady Georgina, your brother had been wounded; and the conſequence indeed ſeem'd tolerably obvious to all of the company, except him, whoſe diſcernment ought reaſonably to have been the quickeſt. For tho' a variety of meſſen-

gers

gers had been dispatch'd, all of whom return'd (like the man in Tom Jones) with the ominous answer, that she was not to be found. The Captain obstinately persisted she must be *somewhere*. Now of this, it did not appear, that any of the company had the least doubt, and the only point in question was *where*. By various interrogations, this, at length, was guess'd at; since it appear'd from the servants, that the ingenious Mr. Warren, Lord Spenser's gentleman, had contriv'd to have a chaise and four in waiting at six in the morning, in which there was no room to doubt but the happy couple had withdrawn themselves: and, upon further examination, it was discover'd the unfortunate Captain, had not only lost his wife, but what is still dearer, her jewels; in consequence of which, swords, pistols, post-horses, and a divorce, resounded most vociferously.—The former however, were render'd useless by the address of Lord

Somerset, who contriv'd to misinform him with regard to their *route*, in order to shelter Lord Spenser from danger; in consequence of which, the Captain returned, satisfied that they had escap'd his revenge, and determin'd to set off for the North to morrow. *Pity*, he deserves not; for the intrigue had long been sufficiently plain I am told: and danger, from the sagacious shrugs of the company, I apprehend there is none. Lord Somerset, however, was deeply offended; Lord Melross not too highly pleas'd at the compliment; and both secretly surpris'd they had not suspected the plot, from the facility with which Lord Spenser descended from his heroics with regard to me.— So ends my tedious epistle.

Lord Melross is at length married, and Mrs. Obrien, has by this time, receiv'd the certain intelligence of it. She will bear it, I hope, as she ought. She has hitherto

hitherto been all that is excellent in woman. Directing a fine underſtanding towards correcting the errors of a warm heart, and living up to that rule of virtue, ſhe thinks neceſſary or commendable in others.——Adieu, my ſweet girl; and believe, that neither abſence or pleaſure, can efface the tender wife, the fond mother, and the eſtimable friend, from the boſom of her

EDWARD NUGENT.

P. S. All here deſire their remembrances. Lord Melroſs in particular offers his.

LET-

LETTER LXXIV.

To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mr. Nugent.

Mount-Herbert, Feb.

I Have juſt receiv'd your ſhort epiſtle, from which I find, mine did not reach you as ſoon as it ought. But prythee, my dear romantic girl, what extraordinary event didſt thou *think* could intervene, to ſuſpend an event, which had been look'd to, and fixt for weeks before? Didſt thou ſuppoſe ſome giant would run away with the bride? Or ſome wicked enchantreſs deſcend from a chariot drawn by griffins, and lay violent hands on the marble-hearted bridegroom?—Mine has before this reliev'd your anxiety with regard to the fate of either: and let me tell you I expect no ſmall applauſe for my fortitude, in withſtanding more temptations, than

ever

ever fell to the lot of the celebrated monarch of that *large* territory call'd Ithaca. —Since his were only of the muſical kind: but youth, beauty, and harmony, combine in the Syrens of this enchanted ſpot, and I am apt to ſuſpect, that but for a vile deficiency of the two firſt in thoſe of old, the aforementioned hero would have made no better a figure in hiſtory than many of his predeceſſors. My powers of deſcription are almoſt exhauſted, and I can now only tell you, in general terms, that we are involv'd in a conſtant ſucceſſion of amuſements, that leave no time for thought. —Lord Melroſs is the ſoul of every thing with the ladies; and the bride reigns triumphantly over the hearts of the beaux. Forteſcue ſet off this morning; but wiſely conſidering the length of the journey, and the coldneſs of the ſeaſon, (not unlike the ſailor, who having been robb'd himſelf, by way of retaliation, ſtopp'd the

firſt

firſt man he met) prevail'd on the nymph whoſe buſineſs it is to attend Lady Melroſs, to accompany him; and ſhe, (diſcreet as well as kind) has made free with a riding habit in which her lady was to exhibit to day, on a beautiful horſe, my Lord has juſt bought her. The general confuſion amidſt our fair Amazons, was not to be deſcribed, plume nodded vainly at plume, for two whole hours; during which time, Lord Somerſet wonder'd, Lady Somerſet fretted, Lord Melroſs ſoothed, laugh'd, flatter'd;—all would not do; there was no eloquence in the tongue, or the eyes of man, that could win the bride from her dreſſing-room, in any other habit; and the riding plan at length, was given up.

We now talk of returning to town, and your arrival is expected. When ſhall you be inclin'd to ſet out? I will meet you as far

far on the road as you would wiſh, but do not travel in the dark, as I am not with you. Lord Melroſs has been urgent with me to fix in Groſvenor-Square, during our ſhort ſtay in town. Lady Melroſs has alſo twice repeated the invitation, and Lady Somerſet once utter'd ſomewhat of our being at Spenſer-Houſe. Should the latter be preſt, (tho' ſtill repugnant to our wiſhes,) I fear it muſt be comply'd with. The conduct of your father, my love, has been too kind, and too generous, to allow of further heſitation; particularly as Lord Spenſer is abſent.— Whilſt you were expos'd to neglect on my account, or I to perſonal inſult, nothing ſhould have tempted me to become the inmate of your family; but that paſt, I dare not, ought not, to indulge my own caprice or pride, by another refuſal. I have written to day, only becauſe it is the poſt, and I wiſh'd to learn with certainty,

tainty, when you leave Mulberry-Mount, once more to gratify the eyes and heart, of your

Faithful and Affectionate,

EDWARD NUGENT.

P. S. Kiss our sweet boy for me.

LET-

LETTER LXXV.

To Lady Helen Nugent—From Lord Melroſs.

Mount-Herbert, Feb.

I Am venturing, my fair couſin, on a freedom which I know not how to palliate, but under the authority of that valued title by which I addreſs you, and of which I ſhould be too vain, if not reſtrain'd by the example of one, who adds to a much nobler, that luſtre, which half his ſex beſide, might have borrowed from it.

In the language of gallantry, I ought perhaps to tell you, that the loves and the graces, are all weeping your abſence; but that would be to wrong them: they are too faithful in their attachments to have deſerted you, and too conſcious of the

the impoſſibility of finding many of your ſex, with perſons ſo form'd to receive their favours, and minds ſo diſpos'd to adorn them: you muſt therefore content yourſelf with being regretted by that ſhare of the more maſculine virtues, who have rais'd to you a ſhrine in the heart of your huſband.

It is time however, I ſhould explain my reaſons for this ſingular intruſion; if I do it aukwardly, I have a right to your pardon; ſince to write on matters of buſineſs to a lady, and a fair one too, is a teſt of philoſophy, to which mine can but rarely ſubſcribe.

In the engagements enter'd into, previous to a late ceremony, it was propos'd by Lord Somerſet, to give the lady in queſtion, ten thouſand pounds: five of which, were confeſſedly once deſign'd as a part of the portion of a much dearer relation,

relation, till ſhe, nobly daring to forget every mercenary view, left herſelf rich in nothing, but virtue, and happineſs. To condemn the conduct of a character, reſpectable thro' the ties of nature, would ſhew I underſtood but little of hers to whom I addreſs myſelf. In juſtice to my own, however, I muſt declare, I ſought not a liberality that was miſplac'd, nor would have accepted it, but from the fear of its being more ſo. In conſequence of this, Lord Somerſet, a few hours ago, made me rich, not in an unjuſt acquiſition, but in the power of reſtoring it, where it is properly due. In a word, my dear Lady Helen, this little advantage is yours. I have no merit in the offer, nor you any right to refuſe it. It is an inheritance juſtly your own; which the dear boy, (whoſe tongue can now hardly utter your name with the beautiful imperfection of infancy,) would one day reproach

you

you for ſacrificing to falſe delicacy. Your huſband, your child, and your friend, have their ſeparate claims to your attention; and you muſt not injure the one, or wound the heart of the other.

I mean however to lay a tax upon your friendſhip. That of ſilence. I muſt not have Mr. Nugent acquainted with a ſecret of this nature, till you are upon the ſpot; for from *you* only, can I conſent he ſhall receive even an ideal obligation. I have but few felicities, and of thoſe few, I will not be denied one. That friendſhip he has honor'd me with, is amongſt my firſt. It is a diſtinction, of which my heart is ſo jealous, that every barrier of form is a wound to it.

On any other occaſion, I ſhould take both pride and pleaſure in ſoliciting an anſwer; but on this, I muſt be pardon'd in declining it, unleſs on my own condi-

ons.

ons. If Lady Helen will do me the honor of assuring me of her influence with Mr. Nugent, I will defer settling the transfer till she arrives. If she will condescend to write to me as a friend, she will confer a happiness ever synonimous with that title; but if she endeavours to thank me as a benefactor, she will only discover to my heart, the deficiency of its power compared with its inclination.

Lord and Lady Somerset, Lady Melross and myself, (every one indeed) are impatient to embrace you, and the dear boy. Happy that child to whom esteem descends thus as an inheritance. Who comes into the world the belov'd of a thousand hearts!—Whose virtues are supported by example, encourag'd by emulation, and who receives, in the name of those from whom he sprung, the pledge of their being respected. Allow me then to take

take more than a nominal intereſt in an offspring ſo precious, and teach him early to think he has a ſecond father, in the ſincereſt, and moſt affectionate of your friends,

MELROSS.

LET-

LETTER LXXVI.

To the Right Hon. Lord Melroſs—From Lady Helen Nugent.

Mulberry-Mount, Feb.

YOU require my ſilence, my generous, my dear couſin, (for on occaſions like theſe, the ſoul diſclaims all ſex, and riſes to that pure enthuſiaſm which is her perfection,) but are you not an unexampled tyrant, who in the ſame breath command, and render obedience impoſſible? Your generoſity more forcibly calls upon my acknowledgments, than your pen can forbid them; and as there is no virtue in which you can more excel, my plea for diſobeying, will always be ſtronger than any you can offer for the contrary. —Heaven has allotted to you the pleaſure of beſtowing; be not a monopolizer, but leave to us that of being grateful! I will

not refuſe your offer, noble as it is, but accept it as a *certain* proof of your virtues, and a flattering one of mine. But why not let Edward know an obligation ſo affecting? Shall I believe you had ſome reference to me in your injunction? I ought indeed to fear that a friendſhip ſo diſtinguiſhing would leave no room for any other tie. But his, is a capacious heart; a heart, like your own, form'd to receive, to practiſe, to adorn every duty: a ſmaller kind of univerſe, where each individual motion, not only anſwers to its own appointed purpoſe, but combines to the harmony and happineſs of the whole. Can you think him weak enough to ſuppoſe he is degraded, by a generoſity which receives dignity from the hand that beſtows it? Do him, and yourſelf, more juſtice I intreat! look on him, as on one who differs from you, only in ſituation; nor believe he wants any virtue, tho' wanting the power to exert it. So would he

have

have beſtow'd, had he been Lord Melroſs, and ſo would you probably have receiv'd, had you been Mr. Nugent.

Could a mother's love bear increaſe, what is there could add value to a child of my Edward, like your notice!—You have made me *prouder*, but to make me *fonder* of him, is impoſſible.

My congratulations—frigid term!—My wiſhes, my warmeſt wiſhes, attend you, in that union, which will, I hope, compleat all of yours. May you enjoy the happineſs you ſo well know how to beſtow, and the certainty of which, will ever be neceſſary, to that of your affectionate and oblig'd

HELEN NUGENT.

P. S. When I come to town, I will fulfil your commands with regard to Mr. Nugent.

LETTER LXXVII.

To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mr. Nugent.

Mount-Herbert, Feb.

WE have had an odd ſcene here. Lord and Lady Melroſs have almoſt wrangled. To you I can mention this in confidence, tho' your own judgment will point out the danger of permiting it to go further. The truth is, he wiſhes to be in town; and I confeſs, that her inclination to remain longer here, appear'd, even to me, rather a capricious obſtinacy; he is weary of the frivolous croud who ſurround him, to whom he is oblig'd to devote every hour of his time; yet this point was given up, and he agreed to remain as long as ſhe wiſh'd it. I left them after dinner, and withdrew to the ſtudy, having letters of buſineſs to write, where I had been about an hour, when

when Lord Melroſs came in. He deſir'd I would not be diſturb'd, in a tone, which diſcover'd that ſomewhat diſturb'd him, and throwing himſelf acroſs ſome chairs which were rang'd on the other ſide of the fire, reſted his head on his hand. From this poſture he ſtarted, on hearing a female ſtep in the paſſage; it was the lady.

"Well my Lord, are you in a better humour now?"—

"Have I then been ill-humour'd," ſaid he, affecting to ſmile.

"Indeed I think you have; and *very* ill-humour'd too."

"The offence was involuntary," he replied, with an air ſtill more conſtrain'd; adding gravely, "I withdrew to do penance for it."

"To make *us* do penance, you mean. —But come, give me your hand then, and return."—

"My heart," cried he, drawing her near him, with recover'd good-humour:—

" but not my head, my dear. *That*, unfortunately is not at my own command.—Upon my ſoul, I can make no more *bouts-rimés*."—

" Upon my word, but you muſt; ſo don't be fantaſtical."—

" Excuſe me!"

" No indeed!"

" Only for an hour.—I told you I have a head ach."—

" Not for a moment.—Mr. Nugent, I appeal to you,—I have follow'd this good man,—let me ſee, how was it, my Lord? From the dining parlor, I think, to the drawing-room;—from thence to his dreſſing-room;—from his dreſſing-room, here, a pretty zig-zag journey.—What are you next for, my Lord? The attic or the cellar?"

" Dear Janetta, my frame is diſorder'd, and my mind unhing'd; if it was *your* ſociety that I fled, you would have cauſe

to reproach me;—but it is that world with which you are ſurrounded."—

"They are people of faſhion, my Lord."—he ſmiled.

"We ſhall certainly go to ſleep, if you don't come to entertain us."—

"You have defin'd their characters admirably, my dear!—I defy you to add any thing to the portrait."—

"If you love me, you will come."—

"A powerful incantation! but don't let it be us'd on ſo trifling an occaſion."—

"Very well, my Lord, as you pleaſe! I have only this to add;—If *you* don't go, neither will I."—And down, indeed, ſhe ſat, with an expreſſion of anger on her features, that ill became them.——

"When I told you, Lady Melroſs, (and with ſerioufneſs too) that I was uneaſy, and unwell, I thought I had made *more* than an apology.—Why did you urge me further? Mr. Nugent, don't let us diſturb you."—

"Pray don't ſtir, Mr. Nugent.—Only a little matrimonal wrangle."—"*Any thing more, my Lord?*"—He did not reply; but with a haughty coldneſs, laid his hand on the lock of the door.—

"You don't go," ſaid I, interpoſing.—

"I believe," return'd he, endeavouring to ſmile, "that I ought not."

"You had better, my lord; there is the dreſſing-room, the drawing-room, both vacant yet.——

"I lay claim, only to one apartment in the houſe, Madam, and that is the *ſtudy*. The reſt are freely yours; I ſhall not intrude upon the circle of fops, with which they are fill'd: and, ſince your conduct acquits me of wounding your heart, ſhall eaſily acquit myſelf, for not ſacrificing to your convenience."—She made ſome flaming anſwer to this; and tho' he was ſilent for awhile, drew from him at length, ſtill more pointed reflections. It ended in a tranſport of tears on her ſide, and penitentials

tials of, conſequence, on his. He laviſh'd a thouſand expreſſions of fondneſs; and ſhe wept the more, only to hear them repeated: the entertainment of the company ſeem'd the laſt thing which either recollected, and I march'd off, to endeavour at ſupplying the deficiency.

On a glorious night, when the moon ſhone, as if contemplated by her own beloved Endymion,

"And faintly ſilver'd o'er a world of ſnow,"

this brilliant aſſembly, compos'd of the young and the gay of both ſexes, were all at cards. How, at ſight of the tables, did I reprobate a diverſion, ſo habitual as to become neceſſary. Can theſe be young men, and young women, thought I, juſt entering into life; with all the paſſions, the feelings, the animal ſpirits, incident to their age? Has their blood any flow?

Have their countenances any expreſſion? None. They are ſo many well dreſt automatons. Or at beſt, ſo many grandames, and grandfathers. Diveſted of their farthingales and ruffs indeed; but with all the coldneſs and ſeverity of age on their brow: its formality in their air, and its apathy in their feelings. Love, the firſt dictate of nature, is baniſh'd from, or neglected in the circle, and every conjugal, or maternal affection, keeps weakening in proportion. Cards, from the amuſement, become the buſineſs of their lives; till in ſome hour of chagrin, or ill-fortune, they are aſtoniſh'd at the ſtrength of an attachment, they have never endeavour'd to ſuppreſs, and which it is then too late to ſtruggle with. The tables muſt ſtill be fill'd up, and the riſing generation are call'd in, to aſſiſt at them. A female gambler! a creature, whoſe ſoul, can lie dormant for hours, or wake only to paſſi-

ons.

ons which disgrace it!—I shudder at the idea, and rest, with additional fondness, on the image of one, who, tho' brought a devoted and involuntary victim at the shrine of vanity, still treasur'd in her heart, those virtues and feelings, which render'd it so invaluable; nor produc'd the precious hoard, but to those who could estimate it. A hoard, which leaves all the wealth of the universe, beneath it, —since it renders *you* happy, and *me* so. Lord Melross, soon after came in. He gave me a letter he had receiv'd two hours before, from Captain Erskine, who is arriv'd in town; but said not a word of the quarrel. He then rambled round the tables, and had the happiness of being set down to one, by Lady Somerset. I drew out my little Virgil, and retreated to the sopha, where Lady Melross, soon after, join'd me. She amus'd herself, with all that indolent gayety, which is peculiar to her, in talking on the most frivolous to-

pics, and playing with her lap-dog; till turning round ſuddenly, ſhe aſk'd me, (with a ſort of exultation in her eye,)—"What I thought of the *fracas* between her, and my Lord?"—The air, the word, the queſtion, all ſtruck me with a powerful diſguſt. That ſhe ſhould have ſo little delicacy, or ſo little ſenſibility, as to recur to a ſubject of that nature, and to do ſo in the language of a news-paper ſcribbler!—The wife of *Lord Melroſs*, to do ſo, ſpoke her, little worthy of him: I anſwer'd, with an affectation of gayety, "that I believ'd ſhe did it maliciouſly, to ſhew the weakneſs of our ſex, and the power of her own; but that ſhe ought to be content, with the victory over my Lord, without being cruel enough, to lead me in at the triumph; eſpecially as I was one of her allies."

"But tell me truly," ſaid ſhe, "which of us did you think, would gain the better?"

"The

"The one who yielded firſt, undoubtedly;" return'd I.

"Pho! pho!" cried ſhe, laughing, "that is not what I mean; but you are a downright Frenchman; you ſing *Te Deum* for being beaten. However you cannot but grant, that the advantage lies where it ought, ſince it would be hard indeed, if I had not come off conqueror, on our firſt ſkirmiſh."

"You mean then to pay our ſex a compliment."

"How ſo?"

"By giving us credit for the larger ſhare of reaſon."

"Give us but the larger ſhare of power; and we will compound for the reaſon," ſhe anſwer'd gayly.—"But what think you of my Lord's temper, Mr. Nugent?"

"Very highly with a little management;—very moderately without it.—He has a deep ſenſe of the juſt; a ſtrong ſenſibility for the amiable, but indulgence for

the

the follies and weakneſſes of thoſe around him, is not his diſtinguiſhing excellence."

"I then, am amidſt thoſe who have *follies* and *weakneſſes*, I ſuppoſe.—I thank you for the hint. My Lord will thank you for it too perhaps."

He does not want it, thought I. Again ſhe had recourſe to the dog, on finding me ſilent.—

"Does Lady Helen, Sir, make any ſtay when ſhe comes to town?"

"That depends on herſelf."—

"*A propos*!—I wonder how her friend Mrs. Obrien does!"—*Her* friend! Oh, thou ungrateful woman! thought I, again; had ſhe not been *thy* friend, thy *beſt* friend, thou hadſt never borne a title, I too plainly ſee, thou knoweſt not how to deſerve.—

"Have *you* heard any thing of her, Sir?" The pointed manner in which this queſtion was aſk'd, left me no doubt of her meaning.—She made it, however, ſuf-

ficiently

ficiently clear, by glancing her eye on Lord Melrofs, and then laugh'd with girlifh abfurdity, at my grave face; (as fhe term'd it). Affur'd me fhe was not jealous; and concluded this ftrange conference, with a panegyric on Mrs. Obrien. —Of being jealous indeed, I acquit her; but this incongruous mixture of artifice, and gayety: this indifference to the *efteem* of Lord Melrofs, yet folicitude to engage his attentions, all befpeak a wrong head, and a cold heart. She diftinguifhes him, only becaufe he is diftinguifh'd of the world; and will be the dupe of that, in inftances, where it will not, as now, conduce to her honor. She has paft for a wit, even with you; but I confefs, I fee nothing, but an affected vivacity; and if fhe makes you laugh, it is always at the expence of another. Indolence and an inceffant defire of amufement, appear to me, her grand characteriftics; and to be

an

an idol, the sole object of her life. Its luxuries, its pleasures, its fallacies, are only valued by her, as they conduce to gratify one of these foibles.—Let her tremble at the hour, when all these will pall: it will, I fear, be the last of her enjoyments.

I have just receiv'd yours, and will not fail to meet you, exactly to the time you appoint. Lord and Lady Somerset go to town to-morrow, with the chief of the party: those that remain, will also be dispers'd the next day, and directions are sent to Grosvenor-Square, to prepare for the reception of Lord and Lady Melross. —He is not well; yet affects a vivacity, that deceives every one around him.—The great difficulty of meeting Mrs. O'bren, I believe, lies at his heart. The sooner it is surmounted, the better. I affect, however, to be ignorant of his feelings, for when a generous and noble mind

condescends

condescends to the hypocrisy of happiness, the veil cannot be withdrawn, without tearing the heart it covers.

In the hope of embracing you shortly, I remain,

Ever your affectionate, &c.

EDWARD NUGENT.

LET-

LETTER LXXVIII.

To Mrs. Obrien—From Lady Helen Nugent.

Spenser-House, March.

I Am just arriv'd in town, my dear friend, and impatient to embrace you. The lights and carriages at your door, alone prevented my stopping there, for we drove purposely down. When shall I be likely to find you at home, to-morrow? I do not mention your coming here.—Here! where you shed so many bitter tears, and in *my* dressing-room too. I shall never call it mine with pleasure again. We are, however, to remain here, I find, which will be, in some degree, a restraint upon our meetings: but not I hope, a great one. It is, of the two, better than being in Grosvenor-Square, which would otherwise have been the case.—Lord Melross, I have seen: he knew we

were

were expected to night, and was here to welcome us.—He enquir'd after you.—*Tenderly* enquir'd.—But it was with a tenderness void of emotion, that seem'd the result of esteem, and respect. You will meet, I now perceive, with the calmness you wish. On his part, the struggle (if any there was) is over; and what is there you are not equal to? He told me he hoped they should have the honor of seeing you, and I assur'd him you only waited their return to town. Thus you see, every thing is prepar'd. Arm yourself, my beloved Sophia, and do not sink under one, who can never be your rival, in any thing but fortune, and person.—Let her display those silly ornaments, of which she was so vain; let Lady Somerset enjoy the ostentatious glitter, she has set in competition with every natural and mental advantage. Folly, weakness, and vice, have conspir'd to oppress you: but your revenge is within yourself. Those

sighs

ſighs which wither the heart, yet mature all its virtues. Mr. Nugent tells me, that Mr. Obrien and Davenport, are at length come to ſome accomodation. I approve highly, of the reſolution the latter has enter'd into, with regard to any further conceſſions. If Mr. Obrien ſuppos'd, that by winning your conſent, he was ſure of your truſtees, there is no violence of temper, you would not have to dread. My little Herbert has borne his journey manfully. —Appoint your own hour to-morrow, and I will bring him with me—till when, I am,

Your Affectionate,

H. NUGENT.

LET-

LETTER LXXIX.

To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mrs. Obrien.

Portland-Place, March.

THAT you ſhould be in town, without my being able to welcome you there, or that I ſhould be nominal miſtreſs of a houſe, in which thoſe I love, muſt enter with ſecrecy or diſguſt, is a ſubject of the deepeſt regret to me. Oh Lady Helen! is *this* then, the end of all thoſe deluſive proſpects, with which I enter'd life.—Friendſhip! fortune! love! but I will not recur to them.—They were vapours that once ſwam before my eyes, but the firſt tear that fell from thence, extinguiſh'd them.—A woman in practice, tho' ſomewhat more in theory, I fluctuate by turns, between reaſon, and deſpondency.—A thouſand contrary impulſes, harraſs,

rafs, and wound me.—I look round on the whole univerſe, and behold only a ſolitude.—I ſink, oppreſt with that, and myſelf.—I ſtruggle, riſe, ſink, and riſe again. —Such is my life—*nacqui per penare vivo per piangere, & morirò, per non poter più reſiſtere.*

To-morrow then, you will ſee me.—You will expect to find me diffuſe, animated, impaſſion'd.—Such as you ſee me on paper; but prepare yourſelf for a contrary character: the vigor of mine, is loſt. —Even to you, I cannot dwell, but at moments, on thoſe painful topics, which ſeem to engroſs me.—They lie at my heart, and dread to reach my lips. Mr. Obrien will be out by one o'Clock at furtheſt, and I ſhall then impatiently expect to embrace you.

S. O.

LET-

LETTER LXXX.

To Mrs. Obrien—From Lady Helen Nugent.

Spenser-House, March.

I Hoped, my dear friend, to have ſpent ſome hours again with you, either this morning, or to-morrow; but my mother has been laying out a liſt of engagements, which will not leave me the power.—Shall I ſee you to-morrow evening in Groſvenor-Square?—Say, yes! you muſt not defer it. Lady Melroſs, aſk'd me, if ſhe ſhould ſee you at Court; I told her, I believ'd you were indiſpos'd. The papers inform'd you, they were both there. —She was elegantly dreſt.—Sir George Irwirn has preſented her with a watch-chain and bracelets, worth a thouſand pounds; and her jewels are ſuperb.—But what are theſe advantages! dangerous, I fear;

fear; ſure, I am, ſhe is not the more amiable,—perhaps not the happier, for poſſeſſing them. However they *are* advantages in the eye of the world; and I am not going to ape the philoſopher, ſo far, as to deſpiſe them. Great have been the debates, with regard to our going to St. James's.—To be in London, and not to be preſented, ſay all my family, is to ſtamp myſelf forever with inſignificance.—But to go, on the mere credit of having once borne the name of Spenſer, however my reception might be ſecur'd, would ſurely be rendering myſelf, and Mr. Nugent ridiculous. *Without* him, I will not go.—*With* him, he ſays, I cannot; not a drop of noble blood, can we trace in his veins. What buſineſs had the ſon of a poor painter, to have more underſtanding, more real learning, and more active morality, than half the peers in the court calendar?

My

My mother and a ſet of tabbies, choſen for the purpoſe, were lock'd up four hours, like a grand jury, in deep deliberation on this important ſubject. "Who was his grandfather," aſks my mother.

"A Wine-merchant," replies Edward very gravely.

"His uncle!"

"A Clothier!"

"His couſins!"

"Some Soldiers, ſome Mercers, ſome Weavers, he believ'd."

"Merciful Heaven! what a horrible arrangement!" cries Lady Somerſet.

"Not a gentleman in the family!" cries the toothleſs Lady Dunglas.

"Not one Madam;" returns Mr. Nugent, with a bow that contradicts his words.

"Mercers! Weavers! Wine-merchants! Not even a *literally* perſon amongſt them!" exclaims another antique.

"Mere Hottentots, Madam!" ſays Lady Somerſet.

"Gude troth, there's naithing to be made o' the buſineſs!" adds the mother of all antiques, the Dowager Lady Kincairney.

"Oh nothing, nothing!" exclaims the whole party unanimouſly.

"Nothing, nothing, dear ladies!" reechoes Mr. Nugent. "Heaven, when it had given us all two hands, as many legs, a pair of eyes, and a reaſonable quantity of brains, never thought of a *coat of arms*, tho' an article full as neceſſary in this world, as any of the above mention'd.—The error, I fear, cannot now be rectified, and Lady Helen will have the goodneſs to take me as I am."—This ſaucy air, (and moſt agreeably ſaucy, his was, when he ſpoke it,) did not do; they took it for humility. We were voted out of the conſultation, and a grand genealogy was at length fabricated amongſt them; at which,

I thought Lord Melroſs and Mr. Nugent would never heve been ſerious again; ſo many odd *critiques* did they make upon it. Sometimes it was to be left in a hackney coach, in order to diſpoſe of it; for Edward ſwore he would not face it out, for both the Indies. But this treaſure, ſo invaluable, is unfortunately mere parchment, to any body but ourſelves; and would certainly be reſtor'd, for leſs than half-a-crown reward. They then thought of firing the houſe; but a more expeditious method was gently hinted by my father, and, under his auſpices, Lord Melroſs, (who dare do any thing with Lady Somerſet) convey'd this precious monument of our grandeur, to the flames, where it was quickly conſum'd.—Her Ladyſhip bridled when ſhe came in;—my father expoſtulated;—the executor of the miſchief laugh'd, and ſaid a few civil things to her, and peace was reſtor'd.

"Yet you *wish'd* to be a gentleman, Edward, (no offence)" ſaid my father.—"Why elſe chuſe a profeſſion, which confeſſedly ſpeaks an ambition above the reſt of your family. Remember I ſpeak to you as my ſon."

"You do me honor, my Lord! do not imagine I contemn birth, becauſe I think it unneceſſary. On the contrary, I honor, and value it. Noble diſtinctions, imply original merit in thoſe who firſt receiv'd them, and are a ſort of brilliant vapour thrown around it, to point it out to the admiration of all, and the particular emulation of the fortunate inheritor. But there are ſtill nobler, to which every man may without vanity aſpire, and without weakneſs may eſtimate. He who diſtinguiſhes *himſelf*, appropriates that, of which great birth is only the ſhadow, and bears a patent of nobility, from a being to whom the greateſt earthly one, is indebted for his."

"That

"That Mr. Nugent chose a profession, by which he was elevated above those, he has courage enough, not to disclaim," said Lord Melross, "appears to me, less an effort of reflection, or pride, than of that congeniality which subsists between noble minds and noble pursuits. The love of the fine arts, a thirst for literature, or a speculative disposition, equally incline us to that mode of life, in which we may pursue them with consistency. He who adopts either, cannot be accus'd of simply wishing to rise, to what the world terms a *gentleman*;—he seeks only to be *himself*;—and involuntarily acquires a name, while he gratifies an impulse."

"You have done me justice, my Lord," said Mr. Nugent, "tho' in terms more flattering, than can well accord with that expression. Distinction, as distinction merely, I should despise myself for desiring; but consider'd only as included in more noble pursuits, I do not censure it.—

Whilſt it is either the reward, the incitement to, or the memorial of a merit, I even cheriſh it. My life has afforded me but one; but that has been ſo great, I dare hardly aſpire beyond it: and, what is rather ſingular, the honor, has ſtill been but ſecond to the happineſs." He look'd affectionately at me, as he ſpoke. My father wiped his eyes, and ſmiled on both. "What ſhall we do, my Lord, with this old-faſhion'd couple?" addreſſing himſelf to my couſin.

"Send them back to Arcadia, or they will make half the modern ones, hang themſelves in a week."

"*You* don't intend to be one of them, my Lord," ſaid Lady Somerſet, very gravely.——

"Does your Ladyſhip ſee any thing of that kind in my face?" return'd he, compoſing it with a dry air. "What ſay you, my dear?" turning to Janetta, for

my

my mother, he perceiv'd, did not much admire his gayety.

"Truly, my Lord, you have a valiant ſpirit of your own; if any ſuch vulgar fate awaits us, I believe it will fall to my lot." A pſha! from Lady Somerſet, ſilenc'd all parties; ſhe call'd for the cards; Lord Melroſs vaniſh'd; Janetta look'd at her watch, and order'd her chair, to which Mr. Nugent led her, and return'd to be nail'd to the whiſt table, tho' his Virgil lay in his pocket, more woefully penn'd up, than poor Aſmodeo in the conjuror's phial. I went to my dear boy, whoſe ſmiles gave me a pleaſure beyond all the jewels of the Indies, till the hour of ſupper arrived; when Edward's eyes reproach'd my deſertion, till he almoſt made me laugh outright.——Adieu, my dear friend, ſhall I ſee you to-morrow?

Yours ever,

LETTER LXXXI.

To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mrs. Obrien.

Portland-Place, March.

I Will comply, my dear friend, with your wiſhes, and my own ideas of propriety, by meeting you to-morrow in Groſvenor ſquare. Forgive my weakneſs, if I have thus delay'd it:—*it is* a hard ſtruggle! I do not bluſh to confeſs it. Was Lady Melroſs a delicate, a generous woman, I think I could ſee her without pain, but ſhe contributed to wound me, at a moment when every pang ſunk deep.—But I will, if poſſible, efface the remembrance, and ſee in her, only *his* wife, and your relation.

I am going to Winbrook. You will be ſurpris'd at ſuch a retreat, at the only period when I can promiſe myſelf the pleaſure

ſure of ſeeing you, tho' by accident, and not without conſtraint. But my motive I am ſure you will approve, when you hear it. Mr. Obrien din'd at home to-day.— A circumſtance ſufficiently ſingular, to prepare me for ſomewhat more. After dinner we remain'd *tête à tête*. He was not very loquacious, neither was I.

"I am thinking," ſaid he, throwing himſelf back in the chair, his toothpick in his hand, "I am thinking to give a maſqued ball next week."

"A maſqued ball!" ſaid I, ſtaring.

"It will be more elegant than a rout," return'd he, with his eyes ſtill fixt on the fire.——

"You are dreaming, Mr. Obrien," I replied.

"Why ſo?" ſaid he, ſtaring in his turn.

"Can you think, Sir, in the ſituation of our affairs, of incurring, this winter at leaſt, an additional expence?"

"Why what the devil's the matter with them?"——

I made no anſwer, but, riſing, fetch'd from the adjoining room, a long, long liſt, of bills, moſt of them incurr'd for himſelf, all unknown to me, and laid them on the table.——

"And what am I to do with theſe?"

"Diſcharge them, I apprehend, Sir!"

"So I will! but our forefathers had an old-faſhion'd way of ſettling that buſineſs; —we, their wiſer offſpring, have hit off a much better, and always ſet aſide an old account, by contracting a new one. Burn theſe fellows papers; give them each a freſh order; and you'll ſee the powder'd monkeys bow to the ground, and go home as happy as ſo many princes."

"Excuſe me, Sir; I cannot adopt this cuſtom; to teach the weak to ape the vices and follies of their ſuperiors, by obliging them to live upon both, is to ſap the foundation of civil ſociety and make a general

neral bankruptcy of honeſty, and fortune."——

"The way of the world, Mrs. Obrien;" ſhrugging his ſhoulders, and half whiſtling. "If you can pay the ſcoundrels, do!"

"You beſt know I cannot, Sir."

"Then I recommend you to go on as other people do. I ſhall only juſt obſerve, that if you don't chuſe a ball, you may chance to have an execution in your houſe; and, of the two, I really think *lords* as good company as bailiffs."

"An execution, Mr. Obrien! and not a year elaps'd!"——

"Very true Madam! but if you chuſe to ſettle your fortune in ſuch a manner, that it is of no uſe either to yourſelf or any one elſe, you muſt take the conſequence. Fame already reports you had none; and who do you think will take the trouble to go to a muſty fellow like Davenport, to enquire? In ſhort, when

you are once in for it, to live away, is the only method to live at all; ſo whether it is your pleaſure, or not, aſſure yourſelf, I ſhall ſend tickets in your name."

"As you pleaſe, Sir. But aſſure yourſelf alſo, it will be *only* my name! I ſhall ſet out for Winbrook on Saturday, nor will I return, till next winter. You do not know the ſpirit you provoke. My happineſs, my fortune, are yours to deſtroy; but the integrity due to my own heart, and thoſe around me, I will preſerve at the hazard of every thing dereſt."——

"Heroics, Madam!"

"Common ſenſe, Mr. Obrien! common honeſty.——You think me unfeeling, Sir; inſenſible of injuries I do not reſent, and devoid of reſolution, becauſe I endeavour to ſuppreſs ſullenneſs. But know me better! She who dares to aim at conquering herſelf, is equal to any other ſtruggle. I will never interfere with your

pleaſures,

pleasures, or your pursuits; I will never, if possible, weary you with reproach, or irritate you by petulance; leave me then, Sir, all that you can leave me, the rectitude of my mind. I demand your permission, I even request it, to go to Winbrook—to *Winbrook!*—Ah, Mr. Obrien, do I not conquer myself, when I wish to go there?" I endeavour'd to conceal my tears. He look'd at me with a sort of mortified grandeur, and ringing the bell, call'd for his hat.

"Have I your leave, Sir?" said I, as he was going.

"*Madame est la maîtresse*," return'd he, marching off, with an air: and with this permission, I shall certainly depart. I know not even, whether I shall not enjoy your company more truly by leaving town, than remaining here, where the short periods of our meeting, are embitter'd by the fear of interruption. At Winbrook,

you

you may perhaps, be able to ſpend a few happy days, before you ſet off, and I dare anſwer for Mr. Obrien not leaving town at preſent.—Our income already exceeded, it would be madneſs in me to authorize further extravagance, by drawing upon Davenport, except it is to ſettle the accounts due. Even in the country, it may not be in my power, to avoid complying with Mr. Obriens requeſt; but his conduct will not at leaſt receive the ſanction of my preſence; nor will the world have ſo much cauſe to cenſure me.

So, Mr. Nugent abſolutely diſclaims his noble anceſtors! *he* may ſafely do ſo. I would not recommend his example very extenſively; for what would become of diſtinctions!—"*Chaos would come again,*" I fear, if every thing was reduc'd to perſonal merit. Have you heard any thing of Lord Spenſer? Lady Georgina, I am

told

told, is a widow, as the Captain was kill'd in a duel three weeks ago. Mr. Obrien, ſays it is a truth, and he is likely to know.

Adieu till to-morrow. My heart is very heavy at the approach of this viſit; but it muſt be. Once more adieu. Will you truſt our little Herbert with me to Winbrook? You ſaid the air of London, did not quite agree with him; a week in the country, might perhaps, be of ſervice, and as you have been oblig'd to wean *him*, it would be only weaning yourſelf. Remember it is to *me*.

Ever yours,

S. O.

LET-

LETTER LXXXII.

To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mrs. Obrien.

Portland Place, April.

THE dreaded visit, is at length over, and your congratulating eye assur'd me, I had commanded myself as I wish'd. All then is well; it was rather my pride, than my heart, that dreaded the encounter. Oh! that heart would indeed have sunk, had it been conscious of a crime. —How distinguishing, was the respect, the attention, of Lord Melrose. Happy circle! if Janetta *knows* all her happiness, what will there be wanting to it. The mild security of your air, the late flatter'd beauty, so chearfully matroniz'd into the retir'd and tranquil wife, the equal, but unofficious tenderness of Mr. Nugent, whose eye involuntarily wanders, till it rests on you, while those of both seem equally

equally to admit the generous ones of Lord Melroſs, to penetrate, and reflect their ſentiments, unite every gentle affection of the mind. Love, friendſhip, confidence! all that renders it noble, or happy.

They urg'd me to go with them to the Pantheon, and Ranelagh; I ſhall ſtay in town to fulfil that engagement. It is my laſt ſacrifice to the opinion of the world, at leaſt, where it claſhes with my own ideas of propriety. But ſcandal itſelf, muſt ſurely be ſilenc'd, when I have been ſeen in their firſt party. Lord Melroſs tells me, he ſees Mr. Obrien often.—What can he mean? Not from choice, I am ſure; ſince he ſeeks him not, it is plain; and tho' familiarity ſubſiſts, all ideas of friendſhip has long been paſt between them. I have my fears leſt the latter is indebted to his Lordſhip, for favours, he ought to bluſh to want. At any rate, by withdrawing

withdrawing myſelf, whatever acquaintance, or obligations, may ſubſiſt, they cannot be conſtrued into a compliment to me.

You will doubtleſs be of our party at the Pantheon, after which we part, my dear friend, till I ſee you at Winbrook. Thanks for your conſent, to take your ſweet boy with me; aſſure yourſelf I will play the mother, and the fond one. My kind compliments to Mr. Nugent.

S. O.

LET-

LETTER LXXXIII.

To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mrs. Obrien.

Winbrook, April.

EVER tender, ever indulgent, and only too partial, is that friend, to whom I am indebted, for thoſe hours ſo happily paſt before I left town. I am here in tranquillity at leaſt. Winter ſeems to have made an early adieu, and the ſoft breath of ſpring awakens all nature.

" Ev'n now, before the vernal heat,
" Sullen, I ſee his train retreat;
" The rugged hoſt, ſtern Eurus guides,
" Who on a rav'nous tyger rides.
" Dimſigur'd, on whoſe robes are ſhewn,
" Shipwrecks, and villages o'erthrown.
" Grim Auſter, dropping all with dew,
" In marble clad of watchet hue;
" And cold, like Zemblan ſavage, ſeen,
" Still threatning with his arrows keen:

" And

"And next, in furry coat, emboſt
"With icicles, his brother Froſt."

After this poetical flouriſh, I know not with what grace, I ſhall proceed; and ought rather to have reſerv'd my quotation, to have fill'd up a flat period at the concluſion of my letter, than to render all that is to follow, dull, by placing it at the beginning.—There however it is.

Your ſweet child has made a warm admirer here, (where indeed does he not?) and of a gentleman of ſome conſequence, tho' I queſtion whether you ever ſaw him; a *nameſake* too—Sir William Nugent. I was ſitting in the parlor with the ſmiling rogue in my arms, when a carriage drove up, and before I could ſummon Mrs. Williamſon, a gentleman was uſher'd in, (as to an empty room) by James, who, not being too bright, never ſaw me, as I was ſitting on the ſide with the door.—The

conſequence

conſequence was an embarraſſment on both ſides, which was reliev'd by his gueſſing at *me*, and announcing himſelf. He had enquir'd, he ſaid, for Mr. Obrien in town, and underſtood he was at Winbrook, being come over himſelf upon buſineſs from the Lord Lieutenant, which would detain him ſome time in London. He took great notice of the child; commended the vivacity of his eyes, the little auburn curls, already peeping over his forehead; and paid me many high compliments, which oblig'd me to undeceive him as to the relationſhip. He then fell upon Mr. Obrien's private concerns:—hinted that he had heard they were derang'd, and that ſo young a manageresſ as myſelf, could hardly teach one œconomy, who never knew the word. From this, and the general tenor of his behaviour, I perceiv'd he had been taught to regard me as an extravagant fine lady, and was ſurpris'd when he found a woman

apparently

apparently domeſtic. We then talk'd of you; being led into the ſubject, by his ſaying he was going to Spenſer-Houſe, on political buſineſs with Lord Somerſet.—He aſk'd me the circumſtances of your marriage, and was agreeably ſurpris'd on finding it was your infant; declaring you were the prettieſt creature in the world two years ago: and I ventur'd to aſſure him he would not find you alter'd for the worſe. Lord and Lady Melroſs came next on the *tapis;* I ſpoke of the former with a reſerve which made Sir William ſmile, and tell me with good-natur'd raillery that "he was either a greater favorite with me, or a leſs one, than he deſerved." He then engag'd himſelf to repeat his viſit ſoon, and took his leave, with a polite familiarity, that left the moſt agreeable impreſſion of his manners.

As Sir William is ſo nearly related to the family, by enquiring into Mr. Obrien's concerns,

concerns, he muſt mean to aſſiſt him in retrieving them; and it will be a favourable opportunity for me to urge a ſeparation: his firſt viſit has prejudic'd me in his favour; not that he is handſome, tho' his perſon is perfectly agreeable; he ſeems about fifty, rather tall, and, like Mr. Obrien, genteel, without being well form'd.—Neither are his features remarkable. But his forehead is open, and white; his hair grows back upon it, and gives his whole countenance expreſſion and gentility. His manners have that perfect eaſe, which, tho' it marks itſelf acquir'd, is as winning as natural grace. And this, with a plainneſs of dreſs becoming his age, and rank, cannot fail to impreſs every one with the idea of a man of faſhion. Throw yourſelf in his way if you meet, for I am ſolicitous to make a friend, and know not how ſo effectually to do it as through you.

I have been riding this morning, and it has been of infinite ſervice to me; partly indeed becauſe I was in ſome danger of breaking my neck; my horſe having been too long idle. For that neck, however, I had ſome value it was plain, by the ſtrenuous efforts I made to ſecure it; while poor James remain'd in a cold ſhiver at a diſtance; for I am no maſculine rider you know; and he is ſo little accuſtom'd to ſee tricks of that kind, that when I diſmounted, he exclaim'd with a fine country tone, "Lord bleſs'ee, Madam, dont'ee mount that there jade again." I have choſen this ruſtic in preference to our more modiſh footmen; who are indeed too much on the model of their maſter, to render their preſence deſirable, when he is not with me.

Ever yours

S. O.

LET-

LETTER LXXXIV.

To Mrs. Obrien—From Lady Helen Nugent.

Spenser-House, April.

YOU were right, my dearest Sophia, in believing you acquitted yourself as you could have wish'd on your visit in Grosve-Square. My congratulating gaze indeed pursued the friend of my heart, with admiration and respect. You never shone so much as when you enter'd; mild, elegant, gentle; no unruly passion arose to disturb the modest confidence of your eye, only a graceful mixture of all were blended upon your cheek. I do not often allow myself praises, which you may term exaggerated; the above were Mr. Nugent's words. You have rivall'd me, I assure you, for he speaks of you with an enthusiasm not less than my own. There

is indeed much I ſee to be done, my dear, in thoſe who reſolve to do much. But from indolence of mind in thoſe of a higher ſphere, as from that of the body in humbler ones, ſpring half the follies and vices of the world. They never riſe to a ſtruggle with themſelves, but err they know not how, purſue the track they know not why, and end, in arraigning the Power which infus'd into them paſſions ſo ungovernable. Whereas could they but once have reſolv'd to ſhake off that lethargy, which renders them an eaſy prey to every weakneſs; but once perſuade themſelves never to yield, till they had endeavour'd to conquer, how many would be ſpar'd the moſt bitter and laſting regret! nor can this be delay'd: for habitual ſupineneſs of mind, is as fatal to its powers, as that of the body, and renders them unfit for, or unequal to the conteſt.

I have ſeen Sir William Nugent. He is really a faſcinating man, and has ſacrific'd to the graces, till they have liberally endow'd him, (tho' without brilliant underſtanding or captivating perſon,) with every charm a Lord Cheſterfield could point out. He dined with us, as did Mr. Obrien; and the former maintain'd very freely, that you were the loveliest woman in England, or Ireland; notwithſtanding the raillery of his nephew. It is no ſecret, that Sir William is to be created Lord Killarlo; he came over for that purpoſe.

We have been—juſt every where! and I too plainly perceive it is my fate to die the Lady Bountiful of my neighborhood. To ſpend my youth in the old-faſhion'd ſtudy of pleaſing my huſband, and grow old in the midſt of grey-hair'd tenants, and ſmiling grand children. Emerg'd ſuddenly from a quiet retreat where every

day brought with it only the little cares of domeſtic life, and every evening was endear'd by their reward, where ſolitude, ſerenity, and a contented heart, inſpir'd hourly the warmeſt ſentiments of gratitude towards Heaven, and benevolence to man, I find myſelf plac'd in a brilliant circle, where the profeſs'd buſineſs of each, is to entertain, or to be entertain'd; I ſtrive to be amus'd; I perſuade others I am ſo: but unfortunately, I catch either myſelf or Edward in a gape, which deſtroys the deluſion. *Till* I am dreſt, I am all buſtle; *after*, all inſipidity. Then it is hideous to ſit, walk, or ſtand, near ones huſband; very true! but by this means, I loſe all the charms of his converſation; and without being a fond, or an officious wife, I may ſurely deſire to be his companion; the confidant of an opinion; or the ſharer in a jeſt. It is certain they will reach me in the courſe of things;

things, but it is alſo certain, that thoſe important trifles, which cement either friendſhip, or love, will often not be retain'd beyond the moment; or if retain'd, will neither be repeated by one, or liſten'd to by the other, when both are dying with wearineſs and *ennui*. From this I would infer, that matrimonial felicity cannot exiſt to any degree of perfection in a gay life. It is almoſt impoſſible, however ardently you may deſerve it, to live for one alone, whilſt ſurrounded thus with hundreds. His approbation cannot be the ſole aim, becauſe the world engroſſes him too much to leave him time for minute attentions. Ceremony intrudes upon the happieſt hours, and the huſband is often oblig'd to give place to the viſitor. Your cares, in dreſs, in converſation, nay, even in houſehold matters, are for others, not for him; and he can only conſider himſelf as a ſharer with them. He loſes in a word, (or ſeems to loſe) that Prome-

thean power of enlivening every word, or thought, which alone can ſatisfy, or preſerve, the heart of a lover. I return from my ſplendid excurſions, to receive from Mr. Nugent, a more flattering tribute of applauſe, than all the admiration of a drawing-room can beſtow. *He* tells me I am handſome, and I think myſelf ſo indeed. His praiſes could make me vain, if he was a lover;—but he is a huſband, and they make me happy.

My brother, we are told, is at Paris.—It is certainly true, that Forteſcue is dead.—The lady will perhaps therefore think it decent to return.——*à propos*! I aſk'd Sir William, if Mrs. Davenport was in Dublin, he ſaid ſhe had been there, and liv'd very gayly.——Adieu.

H. NUGENT.

LET-

LETTER LXXXV.

To Mrs. Obrien—From Lady Helen Nugent.

Spenser-House, May

I Have three paragraphs of intelligence extraordinary. The first is extraordinary enough in conscience for a week's wonder. Miss Irwin has elop'd with Mr. Erskine. They are by this time at Gretna-Green; and Sir George is inconsolable. Had it been any other man existing, he says he could have pardon'd her; but never will own for his son-in-law, one who strikes at the title and fortune of Lord Melross, however feeble the blow. The truth is, however, that Sir George dup'd by a weak fondness for his son, had for many years entirely neglected his daughters, the general cares of a parent excepted. Nor did he awaken to a due attention of them but by the loss of one; after which, as is

uſual in ſuch caſes, from indifference he fell into the oppoſite extreme of unbounded indulgence. The error has puniſh'd itſelf! and Mr. Erſkine has play'd a wiſe game, in ſecuring an alliance, which cannot but do him credit, and a fortune which tho' but ſmall, (ſhe has five thouſand pounds independent of her father,) will enable him to carry on the litigation. If he loſes it, (as undoubtedly he will) the cauſe of reſentment will preſently ſubſide; and he will ſtand the chance of a very fine eſtate from Sir George. And if he gains it, as he weakly flatters himſelf he ſhall, he will be elevated far above any other views. This is my firſt intelligence.—The ſecond more nearly concerns myſelf. Can you believe that my brother has had the weakneſs to marry Lady Georgina? We have had a letter from him, dated Paris, in which without any ceremony he deſires our congratulations, and aſſures us, Forteſcue was a worthleſs fellow, that

did

did not know her value: "he ſhall bring her back ſhortly," he adds, "to Spenſer-Houſe, and is in the interim, ours, &c."—"Here's French eaſe for you," ſays my father, folding the letter; "I hope with all my ſoul ſome *petit maître* will ſtep in to make him repent his frolic! for repent it he may, before he enters Spenſer-Houſe." "She was a woman of birth," Lady Somerſet obſerv'd; tho' not with the moſt placable air in the world." *I* was not, in their opinion, entitled to ſpeak, nor ſhould I indeed at any rate have interfer'd, tho' not over delighted, at having a ſiſter-in-law ſo weak and ſo erring. With my brother's perſon, rank, and even underſtanding, tho' govern'd as it is by paſſions, prejudices, and faſhionable follies, I have ever hoped he would unite himſelf, (or rather, be united by his friends,) to a woman capable of making him happier, and better: they have, I fear, nothing

now before them, but the usual *routine* of follies and extravagance, which will probably end in a divorce. These extravagancies, I much fear, it will not be long before he has the power of indulging to the utmost. I think my father in a very bad state of health:—his asthmatic complaints gain ground continually, and a variety of others make incessant, tho' slow attacks upon him. He is in high spirits, however, being promis'd the vacant ribbon; and has attach'd himself with fresh zeal to politics, of which he is the downright barometer.

My third piece of intelligence touches both of us. Lord Melrose has been very ill. A fever of a violent nature, attack'd him last week; but its duration was proportionably short. However, it frighten'd us all most intolerably, and has effectually delay'd his journey to Scotland. They are going down to Mount-Herbert, for the

the benefit of the air. But as Lady Melroſs carries a little world with her, I ſhall not be of the party. He now goes out, but it has chang'd him a good deal. As to Mr. Nugent, I ſee he is no philoſopher when people are ſick. In one of his buſtles he loſt his Elzevir Virgil. What a mortification! I thought we ſhould have *him* to nurſe next. However, he has recover'd the grief: and the reſtoration of his friend, ſeems to have obliterated it. Will it be convenient to you if I ſpend two or three days at Winbrook next week? I ſhall not bring Edward with me.

H. N.

LETTER LXXXVI.

To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mrs. Obrien.

Winbrook, May.

I Have once more then, loſt you, my dear friend! loſt you indeed! for the houſe ſeems a deſart after ſpending a week with you in it. My ſweet boy too! believe me, I miſs him, as much almoſt as his mother. I had ever an extravagant fondneſs for children. That exquiſite affection which reſides in the heart of each parent for the other, ſeems in them ſo ſweetly to blend, that the playful graces of infancy are hardly neceſſary towards rendering them intereſting. Well did the poets feign love under that form, which ſingly concenters all the tender affections of the mind. Nor is mine capable of imagining a felicity, greater than that woman enjoys,

joys, who, happy in her choice, ſees her-ſelf ſurrounded by the blooming teſtimonies of a love, ſacred in this world, and acceptable in the next. Enabled to tranſmit her own virtues to the boſoms of others and to create in ſome degree their ſouls. Bleſt thro' the various ties, the condens'd affections rarify as they warm, and ſpread in wider circles thro' the whole range of the univerſe. May yours ever, as now, afford you all, that mortality can expect!

Sir William Nugent has paid me another viſit, and ſent me a very elegant ſervice of china: but Mr. Obrien was not, as we expected, with him. Strange man! it is true, Sir William is his uncle; and neither young or handſome; but as I am not very old, a *tête à tête* was rather ridiculous. I put on however, my moſt matronly face, and receiv'd him with the beſt

beſt grace I was able, on finding he was alone: he behav'd, as he always does, with elegance and reſpect. Preſſing me nevertheleſs to go to town. Upon which, I frankly told him my objection, and he underook to make Mr. Obrien more reaſonable in the article of expence. I could not then refuſe this trifling compliment, to one whoſe conduct entitled him to my eſteem, and gratitude. I ſhall therefore ſpend a fortnight in Portland-Place very ſoon.—The rather, as I cannot always avoid meeting Lord Melroſs, unleſs I diſcontinue riding; for ſurely he lives on horſeback. I went to Mount-Herbert the other day. She was indiſpos'd, and could ſee nobody; but well might you call it a *world*, for the inſtant I rode up, I was ſurrounded. Dear variety call'd them all forth, tho' there was not one who would have gone a yard in London to ſee me. It was with difficulty I eſcap'd being drawn

into

into their parties, but the plea of ill health, at length secur'd my repose.—— Adieu my dear friend.—Kiss Mr. Nugent for me, and make my compliments to the dear boy.

S. OBRIEN.

LET-

LETTER LXXXVII.

To Mrs. Obrien—From Lady Helen Nugent.

Spenser-House, May.

"KISS Mr. Nugent for me, and make my compliments to the dear boy." A modest request indeed Sophia, and the last I should have expected to hear from you—Mr. Nugent returns you a thousand acknowledgments, but cannot possibly accept the favor from any other than yourself. I have therefore deferr'd it till we meet in Portland-Place; am I not an obedient wife, my dear? However as our return begins now seriously to be thought of, I am very happy to find we have a chance of seeing you in town. I heard an odd story of Mr. Obrien, the other day. He has been very near a duel, on account of a gaming debt, but the matter

was

was made up, I did not hear by whom; but I ſuppoſe Sir William Nugent. And now for my tale.

Sitting alone in the drawing-room, I ſaw a flaming travelling equipage, three ſervants, their horſes in a foam, drive with rapidity into the Coach-yard. The door was open'd, and in a faſhionable riding frock, hair *à la mode de Paris*, out ſtepp'd my brother, and by the information of a hand, ſomewhat too delicate to be the property of a maſculine body, which reſted on the front window, I concluded, he was accompanied by his fair bride: and ſending Williamſon down with the ſtricteſt orders to deny *me*, as every body elſe was out, I return'd to play bo-peep at the window. My father's firſt favourite and confidant, Vaughan, was parleying with my brother, and, as far as I could gueſs, pleading the orders of his Lord, for refuſing him admittance. Vaughan was a

bold

bold fellow you will ſay; ſo thought I. —A lady's feathers were viſible at the window of the carriage, whoſe face I deſpair'd of ſeeing, till by a toſs of contempt, I perceiv'd it to be indeed the fair Lady Georgina, to whom Spenſer gave his hand, and repulſing Vaughan with the other, led her in, in defiance of all oppoſition.—You will eaſily gueſs, that by this time I had retir'd to a more private apartment, from whence I heard Spenſer bid them tell that inſolent fellow, (meaning Vaughan,) that if he preſum'd to appear before him again, he would have him thrown neck and heels into the Court.—The door of the room was then ſhut; but a violent ringing preſently enſued, and my brother's voice was again exalted, tho' his ordinary key would have ſuffic'd to gratify me.—He aſk'd "who was at home?" And I ſcarce breath'd till I heard them return in anſwer, "that my father

and

and mother were gone to take an airing in the Park, and Mr. Nugent, and I, to make viſits. Lady Georgina then ſcreamed out for chocolate, and the door was once more ſhut. It drew near dinner time; and I could perceive by the unbuckling of trunks and commotion of ſervants, that they were determin'd to remain; tho' (as if they had foreſeen the hurricane that awaited them,) no one return'd home. At length Edward came up, and reliev'd me with the aſſurance, that my father and Lady Somerſet would ſoon be there, as he had ſent a ſervant to patrole the Park, in order to ſtop the coach, and had enter'd himſelf by the private door, to avoid being ſeen. —In, at length they came, and Mr. Nugent and I paſs'd near an hour, during which time, the thunder roll'd very audibly below. At length, a ſort of calm ſeem'd to ſucceed, and Lady Somerſet came up. I knew by her complexion

ſhe

ſhe had been very angry, and ſhe took care to confirm my opinion; for throwing herſelf in a chair, ſhe began declaiming moſt vehemently againſt diſobedience; congratulating herſelf ſhe had not been a mother; and lecturing me ſeverely for ſetting "ſuch an example of undutifulneſs in a ſhameful match, as ſerv'd for a precedent to my brother, and would one day be deſervedly my curſe in my children." A ſpeech ſo groſs, ſo bitter, made even before the man whom ſhe had every reaſon to reſpect, left me no longer miſtreſs of myſelf; and I told her, that "if ſhe knew not how to diſtinguiſh between an alliance contracted with a woman whoſe conduct diſgrac'd an elevated rank, and a man who had ennobled an obſcure one, I left it to herſelf, and the world, to determine, at ſome future period, where the defect lay. That whilſt I had the honor of being under her protection, I had ever treated her with the

reſpect

respect that was due, but that I was now a wife, and a mother, nor could I without violating the duties of both, privilege insults which might then justly be resented, as springing from me." She look'd at me with inexpressible rage and contempt, and rising majestically, swept out. I, who am always a coward when I seem bravest, follow'd her to the stair head; she repuls'd me with hauteur, and turning suddenly round, I found myself almost in the arms of Mr. Nugent.

"You have acquitted yourself so well, both as a wife, and a mother," said he, smiling, "that I only regret you were not sooner both."—"Nay, nay," he added, drying my tears, "I will not allow of this; you have rais'd your own character in my eyes, and taught Lady Somerset a lesson, she will one day blush not to have known." Dinner was announc'd, and we paraded into the parlor, which seem'd envelop'd

velop'd in one ſtately gloom. My brother ſaluted both myſelf and Mr. Nugent, with a grachouſneſs which would have made me glad to ſee him, if I had not caſt my eyes on my little diſagreeable ſiſter. Her Ladyſhip has however, brought over a new complexion, as well as new cloaths. The little eye-brows which adorned a face, not unlike in colour to a cream cheeſe, are now converted into beautiful arches, more ſmooth and dark than ebony, admirably ſet off by roſes, which have ſome reſemblance to thoſe of June, in being a little impair'd by heat. Take her however, as a compoſition of art, powder'd, patch'd, and painted, in the high Pariſian taſte, and ſhe is much improv'd; as a woman, ſhe is leſs agreeable than before, and I ſhall be ſurpris'd if they agree a month longer, as they had warm argument about the length of their laſt ſtage, and I really thought would have

call'd

call'd up the footmen to ſettle the difference. Mr. Nugent was wondering after dinner (as he regularly does once a day) "where he *could* loſe his Virgil."

"Pray my Lord," ſaid ſhe turning to my brother, "did not Virgil write a Homer?" Spenſer, tho' not troubled with learning, did not look too wiſe you may gueſs; the reſt ſtar'd.

"Certainly, Madam," ſaid Mr. Nugent, with admirable preſence of mind, "he wrote long *after* Homer."

* * * * * * * * *

Edward tells me he has been talking to my father about our return to Mulberry-Mount. He has deſir'd we will ſtay a month longer, at which time, he will go with us, and ſpend a few weeks there, before he proceeds to Edinburgh, where his preſence will be neceſſary to Lord Melroſs.

Melroſs. Mr. Nugent did not much incline to ſtay, but as he knows my opinion of my father's health, he left me the option, and I inſtantly decided in favor of a compliance. Sir William Nugent, aſſures me you will be in town next week, I ſhall therefore write no more, and impatiently expect to ſee you.

Yours ever,

HELEN NUGENT.

LET-

LETTER LXXXVIII.

To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mrs. Obrien.

Winbrook, July.

MY abrupt departure from town, after aſſuring you, I ſhould remain till the expiration of your laſt week there, muſt have fill'd you with ſurpriſe. A moment will however, juſtify me in your opinion; Sir William Nugent is, in ſimple terms, a villain; and that, of the very worſt ſpecies.—One, who under the maſk of all thoſe graces, which generally attend the mellow and ſedater virtues of age, conceals a ſelfiſh and depraved heart.—One, who could violate every tie without remorſe, and preſerve all the *ſang-froid* of good-breeding, whilſt he plung'd a dagger in your boſom. Againſt the turbulence of libertiniſm, we may be prepar'd, but againſt ſuch as "*look a lie*,"

" And do their work with bows and ſmiles,
" That like engin'ry, more miſchievous
" Than fleets, or armies, or the cannons thunder,"

What puniſhment is ſufficiently ſevere! —Yet ſuch is the man we have truſted, admir'd, careſt. With what regret did I often ſee Sir William, (weakly good-natur'd as I imagin'd,) ſupply Mr. Obrien's extravagancies, with ſuch ſmall ſums, as collected, would have been a real ſervice to his affairs, which I now too plainly perceive are in a worſe ſtate than ever; and how did a ſingle hour, overturn the obſervation of the preceding month. On the morning of the day I went away, I was alone in my dreſſing-room, with ſome letters of yours, and books lying before me, when Sir William, who had then been our gueſt about a week, tapp'd at my door, and aſk'd if Mr. Obrien was with me. On my anſwering in the negative, he ſeem'd extremely diſappointed, and complain'd of

his

his having neglected to give him ſome information, upon a buſineſs he was to tranſact that morning; adding, as an after thought, that if I would honor him, he ſhould learn more of the matter from me in a quarter of an hour, than from his nephew in an age.—I ſaid, I would attend him.—"No," ſaid he, ſmiling, "*I* will attend you,"—And inſtantly enter'd. He ſat down near me with the ſame eaſy politeneſs he would have done in any other apartment; and, without noticing my employments, or offending me by an appearance of idle curioſity, ſpread a great many papers before me, which, he ſaid, contain'd an eſtimate of Mr. Obrien's debts, and copies of the deeds of mortgage on his eſtate, which he aſſur'd me had never been worth more than ſeven hundred a year, and for many paſt had hardly produc'd half that ſum, thro' ill-management, tho' his tenants had been rack'd in a manner ſhocking to humanity.

To ſell it, he ſaid, was impoſſible, as it is entail'd, and devolves to an infant of ſeven years old, in caſe of deceaſe; and it had already been too much *dipp'd*, (to uſe his own phraſe) to allow him to raiſe a ſingle ſhilling on it. We talk'd ſome time on the affair.—Sir William made a long propoſal, which ſeem'd generous, tho' I did not clearly underſtand it, except that part which regarded Mr. Davenport, who, he ſaid, had refus'd to advance any more. I inſenſibly grew warm, and betray'd my ſentiments on many points, and particularly my wiſhes to ſeparate from Mr. Obrien, in a manner I had not intended.—He appear'd to liſten to me with attention, and recovering ſuddenly from a *rêverie* into which I ſeem'd to have plung'd him,

"I perceive," ſaid he, taking my hand, with an air of ſympathetic benevolence, "that your ideas are too delicate, to be happy

happy in a union with my nephew, had he even the tenderneſs and reſpect for you, he wants; and however charm'd, I find myſelf in even a nominal relationſhip to ſo much beauty and virtue, I cannot but regret its coſting you ſo dear.—The diſorder of his affairs, and his total inſenſibility to thoſe, as well as every becoming conſideration, leaves us, I am ſorry to ſay, little hopes of his amendment; and ſhould they, (which I much doubt,) be *ever* adjuſted, we may expect the ſame derangement, every three or four years. —To prevent, however, your ſuffering by his extravagancies, I am determin'd not to interfere, unleſs he allows you a ſeparate maintenance.—Nevertheleſs, as, even then, your income cannot be equal to the rank in life you are entitled to hold, I propoſe to make my houſe and fortune, yours.—It will be no apparent impropriety in the eye of the world, my age and relationſhip conſider'd, and, on the con-

trary, will prove your ſeparation to have been perfectly honorable.—You ſhall accompany me to Dublin, where the reputation of your beauty has already reach'd. —Tho' I propoſe to make my chief reſidence in London; in a word, all that ſplendor and affection can beſtow, ſhall combine to make you happy, and atone for that trifling difference of age, every day will render leſs perceptible."

"Age! Sir William," cried I, overcome with his benevolence, tho' not inſenſible to the abſurdity of his propoſal, "can you rank me with thoſe weak women, to whom that is a ſubject of diſguſt?—A good heart, and a good underſtanding, muſt be valuable at every period of life; and may mine become contemptible, when I ceaſe to reſpect it in others. —But I was not born for ſo happy a fate, as that of paſſing the remainder of my days, under the protection of a father.—For you," cried I, half guſhing into tears,

"are

"are indeed my father.—Happy in your affection, the ſplendor you promiſe, I have been taught by misfortune to deſpiſe.—But all hearts ,Sir William, are not like yours.—Mr. Obrien will never part with his victim, and the world will but too"——

"No, my deareſt creature," interrupted he, throwing his arms round me, "the world will never cenſure a union, the charms of which they ſhall never know. —As to my nephew, a ſingle word of mine, ſhuts him in a gaol.—Judge then if I am not circumſpect in my meaſures! and, ſince aſſur'd of your conſent,"—he would have kiſs'd me.—Good Heavens! my dear, the odious man would have kiſſed me.—What I ſaid, I know not; but it was ſufficient to convince him of my aſtoniſhment and indignation.—He collected his papers with the moſt perfect indifference, ſaying, "he was ſorry for my ſake, there was any miſunderſtanding between us!"—But I loſt all power of

anſwering, at ſight of Mr. Obrien. Unable to conceal my agitatation, I inſtantly took my reſolution, and recounted the whole of the affair in few words.—He ſmil'd, bow'd ironically, and thanking me for my kind intention, aſſur'd me, he did not intend to meddle with any other powder at preſent, than that harmleſs kind, of which his valet had been pretty liberal. I left them fit companions, but had hardly collected myſelf, and form'd the reſolution of inſtantly going to Winbrook, when Sir George Irwin was announc'd.—I could have diſpens'd with his viſit at this moment, but little diſpos'd as I was for mirth, it was with the utmoſt difficulty I kept my countenance at ſight of him.—His little odd ſcarlet jerkin, with his green waiſtcoat, had ſo much the effect of a parrot, (which he is not very unlike in face,) his bows were ſo endleſs, and his toupet ſo high, and white, that it

was

was really an exertion of the muſcles to be grave. It is true, my ſpirits were afloat, and any thing would have tempted me to laugh or to cry. The weather, the amuſements, and the faſhions, were at length exhauſted; we had even touch'd upon politics, when a profound ſilence prevail'd for full five minutes, which were ſpent by me in drawing and undrawing the ſtrings of my work-bag, and by Sir George, in beating time on his ſnuff-box, to a *mental* tune. How long this would have laſted, Heaven knows; but Sir George, after many examinations of my countenance, at length aroſe to take leave. In riſing alſo, I dropt my knotting ſhuttle, ſciſſars, and many other trifles of the ſame nature, which he pick'd up. Whether my abſence of mind, and apparent anxiety, ſtruck him then particularly, or whether he ſuddenly gain'd courage, I know not, but taking my hand, he apologiz'd for the liberty of detaining me

a few moments longer. Surpris'd and disconcerted, I resum'd my seat with an air of perturbation, doubtless very ridiculous to him, who did not know I had reason equally to fear the old and the young.—He was extremely disconcerted, and hesitated a long time.—But at length told me, "that however ridiculous professions of friendship might appear from the lips of a common acquaintance, he had some claim to mine, by the high one he bore me;" in fine, he hinted to me, "that Sir William had been careful not to leave the world in ignorance of his intended generosity, in settling Mr. Obrien's affairs;" assur'd me, "he knew his character well," and, in fine, generously offer'd, either by his fortune or intervention, to be of whatever service to Mr. Obrien, *I* might deem necessary; and, with an ardor which bespoke the best kind of understanding, that which springs from, and is govern'd by the heart, prohibited my refu-

sal,

ſal, as well as diſclaim'd my gratitude.—How does the plaineſt, the moſt aukward exterior, derive graces, in proportion as it is the abode of the virtues!—The coarſeſt cheek, when fluſh'd with benevolence, the moſt ineloquent tongue, when render'd tremulous by ſympathy, has charms, which, as they are beſtow'd by one boſom, will immediately find a paſſage to the other. It was not in my power to accept the intervention he offer'd; but deeply, ſincerely, did I feel it.—The object of my deriſion a few moments before, he now became that of my reverence, and affection. I ſaw him oppreſt at once with his own misfortunes, and mine; and when he regretted with a degree of ſenſibility unknown to half the world, the miſconduct of a daughter tenderly beloved, my feelings were awaken'd in his cauſe, and perſon ſeem'd abſorb'd in mind. I repreſented Mrs. Erſkine to him in the beſt light I could; but he

ſtopp'd me with an air that admitted not a reply.—" It was not even in your power to defend her, Madam," ſaid he, " and may it prove a leſſon to other parents, never to cultivate the underſtanding of a child, beyond its heart, left with unfeeling diſcernment, it ſhould one day wind itſelf into theirs, only to wound it more ſucceſsfully." He then left me with an abruptneſs more touching than a thouſand ceremonies, to reflect at leiſure on the different conducts of the elegant, the well-bred Sir William, and the unpoliſh'd, and unattractive Sir George.——Adieu, I am fatigued to death

S. O.

LETTER LXXXIX.

To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mrs. Obrien.

Winbrook, July.

I Begin to grow vain of myſelf, my dear.—Adverſity, if it has not made me a happier, has made me a better woman, and I have juſt paſt a ſtruggle, infinitely more difficult than all the temptations Sir William Nugent could offer me. I rode this morning, and, for the firſt time, met Lord Melroſs alone. I may truly ſay, I never ſaw him look ſo well, tho' I view'd him with a much more diſpaſſionate eye than uſual. He join'd me, and we diſcours'd on a number of trifles, frivolous enough in themſelves, but which each endeavour'd to enliven. I was very collected, he very gay, except when he ſpoke of Lady Melroſs. He ſaid, "ſhe was very ill, *extremely* ill," and dwelt upon the-

ſubject

ſubject, with the ſtrongeſt tenderneſs both of tone and manner, often regretting the neceſſity of his journey to Scotland.— We then touch'd upon Sir William, and I thought Lord Melroſs betray'd inadvertently a degree of curioſity and ſurpriſe, on finding me rather recede from, than confirm my former encomiums of him, that violated thoſe rules of indifference and good manners, we had ſeem'd mutually to lay down for ourſelves. At length, we reach'd Winbrook. He diſmounted to aſſiſt me, and I ſlightly aſk'd him, if he would not walk in. His ſervant, (who, I ſuppoſe doubted not but he would,) had taken the opportunity to unbuckle ſome of the accoutrements of his horſe, in order to adjuſt them. In conſequence of which, he ſaid, he would follow me. I turn'd naturally to the left, as I uſually ſit there, purſuing ſome ſubject on which I was ſpeaking, and laughing

ing at the ſame moment, till raiſing my eyes to his, I ſuddenly perceiv'd in them, an emotion ſo apparent, and ſo deep, that I had ſome difficulty in avoiding an exclamation, that would have betray'd my perception of it. I then, for the firſt time, recollected I was in the ſtudy, and reflected upon that ſolitary and penſive air, diffus'd over it——Books, work, and ſome muſic, lay on the table, yet profound ſilence reign'd throughout the houſe, and the Venetian blinds, which had been turned to exclude the ſun, caſt a ſoft light over the whole. For a moment my mind was a perfect chaos; but its powers almoſt as inſtantaneonſly return'd: the reſtraints to which I had habituated myſelf, the ſtruggles I had now been accuſtom'd to conquer, all roſe to account, and I ſaw with ſelf-congratulation, that I was miſtreſs of my own feelings, on an occaſion, which would once have render'd me compleatly their victim.

"And

"And do you *often* ſit here?" ſaid he, throwing himſelf on a chair next me, and reſting his arm over the back of mine.

"Yes generally," return'd I. He fixt his eyes intently on me; agitation, tenderneſs, a thouſand ſtruggling emotions, ſeem'd riſing there.

"I live here," continued I, "in a ſolitude equally ſuited to my taſte, and my fortune, except when Mr. Obrien enlivens it. Books, work, and reflection, paſs away whole hours."—

"They are very fortunate," interrupted he, in a low and tremulous tone, "who engroſs thoſe happy periods you devote to the latter."

"Thoſe fortunate beings, my Lord, have the honor of ſurrounding you. At leaſt, the better part of them, in their writings." Again he look'd at me; a ſort of latent diſtruſt aroſe in his eye, as if he thought I diſſembled. One weak, one erring glance, would, I dare believe, have urg'd

an

an explanation, criminal in either. Thoſe penetrating eyes almoſt awaken'd in my heart, the treacherous ſenſations, I had ſpent months in conquering.

"I was *once* here,"—ſaid he, and withdrew his arm from my chair, as if he meant to have taken my hand, but withheld by a powerful recollection, again he ſtopp'd.

"You have been here, my Lord, very often; and will be ſo again, I hope, when Lady Melroſs has recover'd her indiſpoſition. I am not turn'd anchorite, tho' I boaſt of my ſolitude, and only wait the arrival of Mr. Obrien, to aſſemble once more that circle of friends, amidſt which, I hope both now and ever, to have the honor of ranking your Lordſhip."

"That I am happy enough to be ſo rank'd by Mrs. Obrien," return'd he, riſing with a more collected air, "has been the firſt pleaſure of my life, and its greateſt

diſtinction.

diſtinction. I have endeavour'd to entitle myſelf to it," he added, pauſing, "no matter how! the ſacrifices, like the reward, are *here*. Lady Melroſs will be too happy, in being able to mingle in that diſtinguiſh'd circle you enrich, and which I ſhall not fail often to recollect, tho' it will not be permitted me to make one of it." He juſt touch'd my hand as he ſpoke, with an air half gallant, and half ſad; made his compliments again at the window, at which I ſtood, having drawn up the blind, and was out of ſight in a moment.——And now, my dear, have I not done well? Convinc'd of my indifference from my tone, my manner, the ſmiling air with which I watch'd him mount, after compliments which he might reaſonably ſuppoſe, would touch, and affect me, he will accuſtom himſelf to conſider me with thoſe ſentiments I have endeavour'd to inſpire; and whatever my heart

heart may ſuffer for awhile, every future hour will better enable me to ſupport the conteſt, as every paſt one has hitherto done. Lady Melroſs has a large ſhare of his affection, it is plain; may ſhe poſſeſs it all, is the ſincereſt prayer of

Your Affectionate,

S. O.

LET-

LETTER XC.

To Mrs. Obrien—From Lady Helen Nugent.

Stanton-Audley, July.

YOU have indeed done well, my dear; and deſerve that increaſing eſteem, every hour gives birth to, in the hearts of all who know you. Lady Melroſs *has* been extremely ill, ſo ill, that my Lord has loſt an heir, and my mother been fretted almoſt into a fever. Janetta over-danc'd herſelf laſt week, tho' it is an exerciſe ſhe is not very fond of, which made it the more ſurpriſing; but there has been great regret, and confuſion upon it. The journey of Lord Melroſs, has again been delay'd by this accident, but on Wedneſday ſe'nnight we all poſitively ſet off together. —His Lordſhip goes on immediately; we ſhall make ſome ſtay at Mulberry-Mount. —*We* I ſay, for they talk of my going to

to Edinburgh, as there will be a neceſſity for proving the converſation held by my uncle, when we were firſt introduc'd to this ſon, now ſo dear. How my Herbert will bear ſuch journeying I know not; for my own part, I long to be once more peaceably at home, however *il fant s'accoutumer.*

Lady Georgina has conſented to put on mourning, and to live with her aunt, Lady Willingford, for ſome months at leaſt; my father would not hear of her appearing yet, as the wife of my brother, tho' ſhe had ſo little ſenſe of decency as to deſire it, and Spenſer was the more reaſonable of the two: it is therefore to be one of thoſe ſecrets every body knows, as he is to viſit at the houſe.

But what ſhall we ſay to the diſciple of the Graces? To the inſinuating, the courtly Sir William Nugent? Or to that dear, whimſical

whimſical Sir George; whoſe generous heart, ſets all the heads in the world at defiance? I really burn to tell Lord Melroſs of an inſtance of friendſhip, that would I am ſure, touch him ſo deeply. This however, Edward ſays, muſt not be.—I ſubmit to wiſer judgments, being indeed of opinion myſelf, that the leaſt his Lordſhip would do, would be to wring Sir William's head off. It was ſurely a colluſion between him, and Obrien. Mr. Nugent will not hear of it; but after all, my dear, theſe men will think better of one another, than they deſerve; tho' my *caro ſpoſo* is not very partial to yours, for two reaſons; firſt, that he is unworthy of you, and ſecondly, that he is an Iriſhman: for Edward is a little national, and is doubly angry with a villain of his own country.—A weakneſs ſurely, in one who might redeem its credit, could it even be loſt, by a ſingle example of vices common to

all.

all. I am not, however, upon the whole, you know, a diſapprover of national partialities.

"Friends, parents, kindred, firſt it will embrace;
"Our *country* next; and next, all human race,"

Says Pope: nobly blending ſelfiſh, and ſocial love, into one great circle of benevolence, of which the firſt is but the moving principle. And Pope, you know, is my oracle.

* * * * * * * * *

What do you think I have done? A compleat thing it muſt be granted. Remembering I had a commiſſion to give Edward before he went out, I march'd down, and open'd the drawing-room door on Sir William, who was ſitting with my father, and Lady Somerſet. I colour'd even to ſcarlet. But I defy you to gueſs how

how I eſcap'd.—Only ſhut the door again, without uttering a ſingle word, and left them all ſtaring at one another, and at Sir William, who was in the midſt of a very pompous bow. This was downright impulſe, for I neither intended it, nor knew I had done it, till too late.—What account I can give of myſelf, Heaven knows; I have juſt told Mr. Nugent of it, and he is laughing ready to kill himſelf. He ſays, my virtue, is like Falſtaff's courage, and teaches me to run away upon *inſtinct*.—

Adieu,

H. NUGENT.

LET-

LETTER XCI.

To Mrs. Obrien—From Lady Helen. Nugent.

Spenser-House, July.

I Am just return'd from a parting visit to Lady Melross, who, is still a little indispos'd, and is come to town in order to be near the Physician. My Lord was not at home, and before I had been there a quarter of an hour, Lady Georgina serpentined in, with a gown, to which all modern gowns are short, and this she calls *weeds*. A terrible accident however was the consequence of this serpentining business; for a pretty little kitten, which the nurse has taught Herbert to notice, and be fond of, darted in at the same moment with herself, in full chase of her Ladyship's train, in which it presumptuously frisk'd, and roll'd, alternately, with a pleasure which

increas'd, with the increasing speed of the lady; who scream'd, stampt, and would have sunk had there been any thing but the floor to receive her, tho' the creature was the smallest, and most diverting you can conceive. Lady Melross was too much the woman of fashion not to profess herself shock'd at so frightful an accident, and every bell was pull'd for drops. They then began discussing some French toys Lady Georgina had brought over with her, which produc'd a very sober dissertation upon the different methods of disposing, and setting jewels; they referr'd but little to me, and when they did, I was ready, like the mother of the Gracchi, to point out my husband, and child, as my most invaluable ones. In the midst of this harangue Mr. Obrien was announc'd. Where is it that hypocrisy learns so much ease? his undress was so genteel, his air so carelessly fashionable, and his whole appearance so studiedly, *un*studied, as might have dup'd

even

even thoſe who knew him. He enter'd into a very gay converſation. What was ſaid, I do not recollect, the ladies agreed with him, was it a challenge, and he put his arm with a very impertinent familiarity round me. The deciſive coldneſs of my manner, however, awed even him; and the entrance of another viſitor, interrupted the jeſt. I retir'd to the Window, and Mr. Obrien followed me; where without perceiving he had done ſo, I made uſe of ſuch fond expreſſions to the child, as are natural. He ſtartled me by a compliment on my ſenſibility, and irritated me by attributing to it, the power of awakening that of others. He continued to talk to me ſome time, and I to liſten with the moſt inflexible coldneſs. Confidence was always intermingled in his character, it is now become its ruling feature: and I, who have not been a witneſs of the regular gradations, am more particularly ſtruck with

it. It has long been a maxim with me, to diſtruſt that man, who, under the maſk of raillery exhauſts every topic of gallantry. Gallantry!—What indeed is it, but a pernicious ſcience, adopted by men of the world! practis'd neither as the expreſſion of eſteem or love; a dubious mode of inſinuating themſelves equally into the moſt vicious, and virtuous hearts! a mode, which it is dangerous to truſt to, and ridiculous to fear!—Such was exactly the definition of Mr. Obrien's behaviour. He made me at length, thoroughly angry, by telling me how much he envied Mr. Nugent, the poſſeſſion of a woman, ſo calculated to beſtow, and receive happineſs.

"In matrimonial connexions, Sir," return'd I, indignantly, "you cannot be ignorant, that an avow'd envy of either party, is an inſult to both; and I remind *you* of it more particularly, becauſe had it not been the ruling tenet of Mrs. Obrien's life, you might long ago, perhaps, have been

been as ridiculous as unworthy."——I look'd earneſtly at him as I ſpoke: I expected him to bluſh, to be diſconcerted;—not in the leaſt;—on the contrary,

"Plagiariſm! downright plagiariſm!"—cried he, taking a letter from his pocket, "I can produce you chapter and verſe"—

"If from your lady, Sir," interrupted I, "I am proud to find our expreſſions as ſimilar as our hearts. Tho' there is indeed little merit in being of the ſame opinion, where it is impoſſible two virtuous ones can differ."

"Faith, my dear Lady Helen," ſaid he, ſmiling, "you had better leave theſe heroics to your friend; who, rather than be loſt amid the vulgar croud of life, chuſes to ſtalk thro' them, exalted on ſtilts, with the chance every moment of being puſh'd into the mire.—Take my advice; leave off the heroine; nature made you charming, and by owning yourſelf a woman, you

may be exalted to a goddeſs, as ſoon as you pleaſe."

"Shameleſs libertine," cried I, bluſhing with an anger that depriv'd me of the power of expreſſing myſelf as I could wiſh, "whom beauty cannot move, or virtue reclaim. I have only to wiſh my countenance was true to my heart, that you might, if poſſible read how deeply I deſpiſe"——

"Hold, hold, my dear Lady Helen," ſaid he, ſeizing my hand, "it is an old rule you know, that when a lady *rails*"——I ſtruggled, frown'd, and wreſting it from him,

"Reſpect my rank, Sir," ſaid I, haughtily, "if you do not my character; and remember, I demand henceforth, that deference from your inferiority, it was a folly to expect from your principles."—This ſpeech I muſt confeſs, was better ſuited to the name of Spenſer, than Nugent,

gent, but I was too angry to reflect I had loſt the former.

"Inſufferable pride!" return'd he, meaſuring me with his eye; "and are your family then Madam, a race of goddeſſes! take care!" he ſtopp'd; recollected himſelf; and, ſtooping with an ironical ſmile to the child, who was creeping by my ſide, with the aſſiſtance of my hand, and the taſſel of the window curtain,

"Go my love," added he, "go, and compoſe its mamma."—And with this pretty piece of wit, he turn'd on his heel, ſat down, with a very impertinent familiarity, on the ſame ſopha with Lady Melroſs, and my ſiſter-in-law, and left me to recover myſelf at leiſure.—Leiſure indeed! for it was half an hour firſt.

* * * * * * * * *

There ſeems to be a ſpell on this journey of ours. It is delay'd another fort-

night on my father's account: and Lord Melroſs, who wiſhes to ſee Janetta quite reſtor'd, (which by the bye, ſhe is, only he don't chuſe to think ſo) will not ſet off till we do. I will ſpend two or three days with you, if Mr. Obrien does not come down; but in the preſent ſituation of affairs, we muſt quarrel if we meet; and as I have already betray'd both my ſentiments and knowledge of his character, further than is prudent, I am not willing for both our ſakes, to add to the error. I ſhall be with you on Monday, till then,—Adieu my dear friend,

Your affectionate,

HELEN NUGENT.

LETTER XCII.

To Mrs. Obrien—From Lady Helen Nugent.

Mulberry-Mount, August.

HERE we are at last, my dear Sophia, and have enjoy'd a week of peace, and retirement. My father bore his journey so much better than he suppos'd he should, that he only stay'd with Lord Melross to breakfast here, and immediately pursued the road to Edinburgh.—Mr. Nugent is impatient to be there, and I plainly perceive does not intend to leave me any peace, till I am prepar'd to depart, which as I have neither judgment in law matters, or taste for formal visits, I am not inclin'd to immediately, tho' for many reasons, I am glad my father is gone. By being personally known, thro' Lady Somerset, to the first people in Scot-

land, he extends and ſtrengthens the intimacies of Lord Melroſs; the latter has already a powerful party, which will every day increaſe, amidſt a nation accuſtom'd to find talents, and perſonal merit, united with rank. Mr. Erſkine has been there ſome weeks; what his hopes, or connexions may be, I know not; but ſure I am, ours are very great. Do not ſuppoſe that I imagine party on either ſide can reſolve, (tho' it may influence,) a conteſt of this nature. Nay I am convinc'd, Lord Melroſs would neither wiſh, or ſeek, ſo undue an advantage: but you know "a victory is twice itſelf, when the achiever brings home full numbers." And as one party or the other, muſt infallibly unite the ſuffrages, it is not unreaſonable, that each ſhould deſire to be the perſon.

"Would you purſue the matter, (with the apparent advantages on your ſide, as they at preſent are,) if you had ground

to

in your own bosom to doubt the justice of your cause?" said my father one day, to Lord Melross.

"As every person will naturally speak well of themselves, my Lord, the question will hardly admit of an answer;" replied my cousin. "With such a consciousness, I should be in my own eyes however, the meanest, and most worthless of human beings, to set possession, and party, against justice. Could Mr. Erskine privately convince me to-morrow, that I had no legal claim to those advantages now contested, I would appeal to no law but that of my own heart, to decide for their resignation."—

"And yet," said I, "you would be equally conscious, that Mr. Erskine was a weak and frivolous character, on whom distinction could confer no real honor; when by contenting yourself with waiting the decision of the court, you might appropriate"——

"I could flourish," interrupted he, smiling, "upon innate integrity, conscience, &c. but that would be to suppose my fair pleader, the dupe of her own sophistry, which I know her better than to believe. We may deceive the head, my dear cousin, but never the heart: but as this test of virtue does not happen to lie in my way, the less I profess, the less I shall be suppos'd to romance.—If Erskine did gain it, my only fear would be, lest, like Prince Prettyman in the Rehearsal, I should prove to be *nobody's son at all.*"

No fear, however, of this, my dear, from the opinions of all here. Even those most interested, think it a desperate game on the other side; that is to say, Lady Somerset, and Lady Melrose. And *à propos!* how go you and that fair cousin of mine on together? Does she visit you often? Does she go abroad much? Let me hear all the news. Lord Melrose wrote to her from hence.

hence. Very good of him, was it not? It almoſt coſt him his breakfaſt; and I had a wicked curioſity to know in what ſtyle it was written.

Expect to hear from me before we ſet-off for Edinburgh, which will not be, till I cannot poſſibly avoid it. Theſe perpetual excurſions from home, derange our affairs, and diſturb our domeſtic comfort; or rather, I fear I am growing old enough to think quietneſs one of the firſt bleſſings of life.——Adieu.

H. NUGENT.

LET.

LETTER XCIII.

To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mrs. Obrien.

Winbrook, August.

LADY Melroſs, and I, my dear, go on as well as any two people can, that never ſee each other; which is exactly the caſe.—She has been at Windſor ever ſince you left us, and as Mr. Obrien never comes down, I am in as perfect a ſolitude, as if I was in Arabia. For my good neighbors, (the few I have,) think me much too fine a lady, (too extravagant a one I ſhould ſay) to allow of their forming any intimacy with me; and a formal diſh of tea once a week, is the extent of my viſits. I ſometimes take my rides towards Peterſham, and Twickenham, where I have a few more modiſh acquaintance; but as I neither talk to

them

them of parties at Winbrook, nor enter into theirs, we gape moſt comfortably, and when we have diſcuſs'd the laſt *fête champetre* and our exotics, we have nothing more to ſay. I have however, ſeen Lady Almerſtone; Lady Maria is married to the Colonel, and gone down into Devonſhire; having left her mother in that painful ſtate between joy and ſorrow, which every parental heart muſt feel, on being oblig'd to congratulate itſelf, on the loſs of its deareſt ſupport. Her Ladyſhip did me the honor of dining with me, as I was alone. I fancy, I was deceiv'd with regard to her underſtanding. It has juſt that equal tenor, which, without riſing to brilliance or ſinking to inſipidity, ſeems rather an innate ſenſe of propriety, than any ſuperiority of intellect.—Always ſerviceable, but never delightful. Such a one is admirable as a protector, a guide, or a relation, but has rarely a ſufficient flow of ſenſibility to be choſen as a friend.

She

She hinted to me, tho' with delicacy enough, many things of Mr. Obrien, one of which was, that he carried on the intrigue between Mr. Erſkine and Miſs Irwin; the former being more deeply indebted to him at play, than his honor or fortune, could anſwer. It is plain to me that Mr. Obrien hates Lord Melroſs; why, I know not, but from that great ground-work of their having been once friends. The one has riſen alike in rank and merit, whilſt the other, by abjuring the latter, every day more obviouſly feels his conſequence degraded, and the equality of youth ſunk, in the double diſtinction of merit, and fortune.

I ſit often, nay, almoſt always, in the ſtudy, and often have I wonder'd what could bring Lord Melroſs in it the firſt evening we met here.—It has been the witneſs of two ſcenes in my life, which tho'

I no longer think of with emotion, I can never forget. But no blinds down, my dear!—none of the tender penſives!—no poetry!—no French authors; blending ſenſe into ſentiment, and leading us into the worſt romance, that of a heated imagination. Impaſſion'd ſentiment, is even dangerous.—It is lighting up a torch, in ſearch of a jewel, which may chance to ſpread a conflagration, poor ſober reaſon has not always time to eſcape from. When I ſay *always*, I mean, with ſuch wandering hearts as are already inclin'd to a weakneſs, it might be happier they did not indulge.—And to ſuch alone, are theſe kind of writings chiefly deſirable.—They are charming, I grant.—Who elſe would take the trouble of decrying them.—You have now, all my *no*-news. Let me hear, I beſeech you, whatever may fall out of importance, in this intereſting conteſt. Friends may be ſanguine!

It

—It is the only circumſtance reſpecting Lord Melroſs, which gives my heart real agitation. Good Heavens! ſhould he really be ſtript of theſe outward diſtinctions the world values ſo highly, how ſhould I then envy the fortunate woman allowed to enrich obſcurity with happineſs, and ſupply the inequalities of fortune, by the more permanent bleſſings of love.—I muſt not dwell upon the ſubject, leſt I ſhould relapſe into a weakneſs now almoſt ſubſided.——Kindeſt compliments to Mr. Nugent. My paper obliges me to ſay Adieu.

Yours ever,

S. Obrien.

LET-

LETTER XCIV.

To Mrs. Obrien—From Lady Helen Nugent.

Edinburgh, September.

YOU have doubtleſs wonder'd at my long ſilence; but my date will account for it.—Yes, here I am, my dear, in the midſt of the compleateſt buſtles, I think, I ever beheld. I told you Mr. Nugent would not permit his dove (am I not his dove?) to reſt the ſole of her foot, any where but in this ſame city of Edinburgh. Well! but now what am I to tell you? That Lords, Dukes, and Advocates beſiege us. That Lord Melroſs leads the mode, *is* the mode; and that poor Mr. Erſkine, but for a hundreth couſin or two, (for there is ſcarce a family of rank in Scotland, to which theirs is not allied,) would be forgotten, and unknown;

known. The fact is, I believe, he committed a very great error in coming so abruptly.—A runaway match, his wife unnotic'd, unintroduc'd, in a city where punctilios of that kind, are strictly adher'd to, neither of them capable of making their own way by personal merit, and the grounds of the litigation not very strong, all these circumstances have united to give Lord Melross a superiority, his appearance is calculated to support. Yet he is delicate to a weakness, in my opinion, on the subject; studiously avoiding every appearance of ostentation, or party; indeed he seems to think it a little affected himself, by the care he takes to avoid our suspecting him of it; for from Mr. Nugent, comes all my information.

What you tell me of Lady Melross, fills me with surprise. All his letters are addrest to her at Mount-Herbert: and, on receiving one from her the other day, he

he told me, with a ſmile, he found *you* were well. Lady Somerſet, however, is with her, and the truth is, I ſuppoſe, they cannot live out of the world; and Windſor, or London, are the only alternatives; tho' the latter can hardly be deſirable yet.

Our reception here, has been perfectly aſſur'd to us by my father's affection; who is nevertheleſs extremely indiſpos'd. I too have been ill. Do not however alarm yourſelf; death will not be the conſequence, tho' perhaps, there may be a life concern'd in it. As to your reflections upon how Lord Melroſs took it into his head to viſit the ſtudy, that memorable evening, it is a queſtion eaſily reſolv'd.—From a very vile trick he had accuſtom'd himſelf to of reading half the night; in conſequence of which, he was an idle varlet in the morning, as any I know, except when *you* were in queſtion. But he has

not blush'd, I assure you, to make me wait breakfast for him at Mulberry-Mount, till I set Mr. Nugent to bring him to his confessions, who reason'd him out of so dangerous a custom.

* * * * * * * * * *

I am just return'd from Lord Strathmarnock's.—Full of a secret too! which, as is generally the case with secrets, I am impatient to communicate. Lord Strathmarnock (I wish he had a shorter name!) is an old gouty nobleman, not worth describing. However he is a hundreth cousin too, and has given an entertainment, in honor of Lord Melross. His Lordship could not do less, than look his best, talk his best, and in short, be the soul of the company: all of which, he perform'd to a miracle, as the eyes of the ladies assur'd him. Mine, being as fashionable as the rest, were never off him,

him, till they encounter'd by accident, those of a young lady in mourning, who sat two or three from me. She view'd me, I observ'd with an air of curiosity, that shew'd she misconstrued my attentions to him; but, disconcerted by my observation, affected to look another way, and in so doing, dropt her fan. I was going to speak to Lord Melross, who stood talking a little distance from us, when a lady who sat next me, said

"I believe that is your fan, Miss Vernon." My Lord turn'd round at the name, and as he presented it to her, fix'd his eyes on her countenance, with a peculiar expression, a somewhat between surprise, disappointment, and sadness, indescribably amiable. I comprehended his look, and could have cried with vexation, at a thousand instantaneous reflections.—The young lady to whom it was directed, colour'd deeply and by a certain tremulous disorder, discover'd to me, that her soul lay too

near

near her eyes, to truſt them in meeting his.' —I was ſorry for her.—Nay more; her name, her youth, and a pleaſing ſet of features, prepoſſeſs'd me in her favour. The flutter ſhe had receiv'd, was not eaſily got over, and the crimſon traces were perceptible in her cheeks for a long time after. The parties now began to form for cards or dancing, and as I was riſing, I caſt my eyes again upon her. They met thoſe of Lord Melroſs. Miſs *Vernon*, ſaid his, in the moſt intelligible language imaginable. The glance of both, diſconcerted her ſo much, that in endeavouring to diſentangle herſelf, from the confuſion of chairs, the unlucky fan once more reach'd the ground. She endeavour'd to ſtoop for it, but too late.

"Some Dæmon has decreed I ſhall be troubleſome to your Lordſhip to night," ſaid ſhe, in a low and tremulous voice, affecting at the ſame time to ſpeak chearfully.

"Dæmons

"Dæmons always wage war with angels, Madam," return'd he, ſmiling; "this is however too favourable a one to me, to engage me on your ſide. I am afraid," he added, looking at the ſticks, which were broken, "you will have cauſe to regret my good-fortune."

I heard no more, tho' he continued talking to her very gallantly for ſome moments, but I ſaw enough to convince me ſhe had neither eye, ear, or voice, for any other perſon. And ſhe involuntarily liſten'd, till ſhe found with ſurpriſe, ſhe was almoſt *tête à tête* with him.——Adieu—I will write as ſoon as the cauſe is heard: all here are with myſelf

Affectionately yours.

HELEN NUGENT.

Several unneceſſary letters are here omitted.

LETTER XCV.

To the Right Hon. Lady Melroſs—From Lord Melroſs.

Edinburgh, October.

AFTER three weeks of diſappointment, and expectation, the firſt intelligence I receive of you, is thro' the channel of a news-paper. Is this kind, is this generous, Janetta? Sole miſtreſs of my fortune, my honor, and repoſe, I lay no reſtraints upon you, but thoſe of the heart. Yet I confeſs I cannot read with pleaſure, that you have time to devote to the moſt profuſe and ſtudied amuſements, whilſt conſcious of your neglect of thoſe ties, which alone beſtow dignity, or propriety, upon ſuch. I will not enlarge upon the ſubject.—Yet it is not the firſt time, I have

have been under the neceſſity of touching upon it. The pitiful encomiums of one ſcribbler, the more pitiful inuendoes of another, have, by turns, awaken'd my indignation and contempt. I have ſeen your name proſtituted to ſanctify the abſurdities of faſhion, and the charms of your perſon conſider'd but as a ſhew-glaſs, where all thoſe abſurdities were to be diſplay'd. *I* am not to be told that by thoſe charms you incur the obſervations, nor *you*, that ſuch obſervations, are conſider'd by half the world, as the early diſtinctions of infamy. Believe me, dear Janetta, the newspaper panegyriſt, rarely praiſes the beauty or the virtue, he does not deſign to corrupt; ſince every rational man knows, how far (where your ſex are concern'd,) that modeſt praiſe which *ſucceeds* the name, is preferable to the flattery, which obtrudes both that, and itſelf, upon the world.— Think me not a cold moraliſt, my love.

You muſt not, nay, you cannot; my temper, and my feelings, both naturally warm, exempt me from the cenſure. To the errors of youth, and inexperience, to thoſe lovely imperfections of your ſex, which too often miſlead, and almoſt always puniſh them, I can be indulgent, even to a weakneſs.—But guard, carefully guard, I intreat you, againſt that dangerous faſcination, that vortex of the world, in which ſo many have ſunk. Too frivolous for pleaſure,—too mad for reflection,—they ſacrifice themſelves, ſolely to be *diſtinguiſh'd;* and *how*, let the annals of Doctors Commons inform us.

I am here involv'd in confuſion. My expectations may, without being ſanguine, ariſe to every thing we could wiſh. My heart is in England; where aſſure yourſelf I ſhall follow it, the inſtant this affair is determin'd, which will probably be, before Chriſtmas. I am an old-faſhion'd fellow,

low, and intend to bring you back the whole ſtock of conſtancy, I carried with me; which conſidering the charms of our northern fair ones, is no inconſiderable compliment. If you doubt them, I refer you to your glaſs for the ſpecimen.

You do not I hope aſſociate much with Lady Georgina. I agree with you, ſhe is not a woman of a bad heart: but there is a certain weakneſs of character, as dangerous as corruption. Her errors may be excuſable, but your own delicacy, and good ſenſe, will convince you, they are not juſtifiable, nor ought your name and hers, to be united.

Lady Somerſet gave us hopes in her laſt, which I ſhall rejoice to find realiz'd; let it be an additional motive with you, my love, to be careful of your health, as

it will be an additional tie, upon the gratitude and tenderneſs, of

Your faithful and affectionate,

MELROSS.

P. S. Make my compliments to Sir George when you ſee him; and excuſe my not anſwering his immediately. I have neither leiſure to think, or ſpeak, but on the great ſubject before me.—When that is decided, or likely to be ſo, I will write. Till then, both you and he muſt find me your debtor. At leaſt ſo, I hope, you will *render* me.

LET-

LETTER XCVI.

To Mrs. Obrien.—From Lady Helen Nugent.

Edinburgh, October.

AFTER delay upon delay, till all parties are heartily weary, the grand debate has at length taken place. Few witneſſes of any faſhion have yet been heard. As to the proceedings, I refer you to the news-papers enclos'd, which will explain them much better than I can. All the world are turn'd lawyers; the Court was crouded beyond conception; in ſhort, I am fatigued with the very ſight of a black coat, and half the inhabitants of this City wear no other colour. Mr. Erſkine has found a very powerful protector in a Sir Alexander Murray.—A relation by marriage to the old Lord Melroſs, to whoſe eſtate his adjoin'd; in conſequence

of which, they had a grand quarrel, and a lawſuit, where Sir Alexander was caſt. This, he has never forgiven; and, wiſely tranſmitting his hatred from father to ſon, (tho' the latter, never knew ſuch a being as the Baronet exiſted,) he has enter'd, with all the warmth and litigiouſneſs of age, into the préſent diſpute. As he has a fine fortune, Erſkine neglects no opportunity of ſecuring his good opinion, and Mrs. Erſkine devotes herſelf to him. I ſhall not fail to acquaint you with the verdict, as ſoon as it is given. The ſole point of law, you will ſee, is the validity of the marriage; ſince the ſon of Lord Melroſs, (either one way, or the other) nobody denies him to be.

And now my dear, do pray lay aſide ſome of that cautious delicacy, you have hitherto obſerv'd on the ſubject, (and particularly in the two or three laſt of yours,*) with

*Omitted.

with regard to Janetta, and let me know your real opinion of her conduct. As I ſee little company, except the large circles I mingle with of an evening, in which my Lord is always one, I can only gueſs by ſome uneaſineſs I perceive in him, and the various queſtions that are aſk'd me as to her wit, her beauty, her taſte for pleaſure, &c. that ſhe indulges it quite as far as ſhe ought. All here (as ſhe is Scotch) are inclin'd to think well of her; nor is it the leaſt of Lord Melroſs's merits in the eyes of his countrywomen, that he choſe a wife from them. He has engag'd for her viſiting Edinburgh next year: a promiſe, I am apt to think ſhe will not be overfond of fulfilling, unleſs in the ſummer; for altho' Edinburgh is a very fine city, and contains very fine folks, it is not London.—And what fine lady can exiſt remote from that. That ſhe refus'd to accompany him now, I have the utmoſt reaſon to ſuppoſe, tho' he was

ſilent on the ſubject; but his eyes are traytors, and prove to me he is not pleas'd whenever the ſubject ariſes.

We have been into Fife. Lord Melroſs has a ſeat there, as old as Holyrood-Houſe, for aught I know; which Lady Somerſet laid ſuch ſtrenuous commands on my father to ſee, that there was no diſobeying. It is a habitation for a divinity.—A Scotch one I mean; for the wind whiſtles moſt comfortably thro' it.

"High on a hill his caſtle ſtude,
"With walls and towers ahight;
"And gudely chambers, fair to ſee,
"Where he lodg'd mony a Knight."

Edward and I ſat upon a ſtone cover'd with grey moſs, and went off in heroics about Oſſian, and Hardiknute; while the blue miſts ſwept over the hills: but what ghoſts they contain'd, I really was not diſ-

pos'd

pos'd to examine: and my father, who was as little gratified with the *real* inhabitants, as the imaginary ones, grew so fretful, and indispos'd, that we were obliged to tell him, how much his leg would become a garter, before we could recover his good humor. Lord Melrofs, you may assure yourself, was not of our party; being too much engag'd to quit town for an hour. As to the rest, I have been no where, but of an evening, except once, when I was blown, (for I cannot say I walk'd) up the Calton-hill on Mr. Nugent's arm. It has a charming view.——Adieu, write soon.

H. N.

LETTER XCVII.

To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mrs. Obrien.

Winbrook, November.

THE reſtleſſneſs with which I ſhall inceſſantly be tormented till I hear the event of the cauſe, hardly gives me the power of anſwering your queſtions as to Lady Melroſs.—Indeed I know not whether I ought. Incapable of governing my own heart, as I could wiſh, it ill becomes me to paſs judgment on the conduct of thoſe around me.—Yet ſince to be ſilent now, would be a ſeverer cenſure than any I am entitled to make, I will give you the *public* voice. Without a vice, or even a reigning foible to give diſſipation the excuſe of taſte, Lady Melroſs has, I fear, launch'd out into every faſhionable folly. —The ſeverity of the ſeaſon, and the early meeting of Parliament, made London

don ſoon aſſume its ſplendor, by collecting all the votaries of pleaſure. I hear of no name but hers. Her entertainments, her gueſts, all hold the moſt ſplendid rank. —Yet no ſlander has yet been paſt upon her character. The brilliant commencement of a gay life, is, of all others, moſt dangerouſly ſeductive. Admiration, ſurpriſe, fear, by turns ſilence every malevolent voice. The goddeſs of the day, conſcious of innocence, reads a deluſive reſpect in every countenance. She does not know that admiration in itſelf incurs envy, that ſurpriſe will but induce it to riſe to ſcandal, and fear will only ſharpen the arrows of both. She will be attack'd, without perhaps, having deſerv'd cenſure, further than by a continuation of thoſe weakneſſes, which firſt claim'd indulgence; and, in the indignation of the moment, may confound her contempt for vulgar prejudices, with that for real duties. I have *bought* my experience.—Happily

pily bought it, without real injury to my character, tho' sav'd from that, only by a timely retreat. I am but too well aware of the danger of the world, that gay scene, in which sorrow flatters itself with finding relief, and happiness seeks for addition. From my heart, I pity Lady Melross; and had she condescended to seek me, I would have dar'd the most hazardous proof of friendship, sincerity.—On the contrary, I have not seen her. She once sent a card to me when I came to town for a few days.—But as I am told her balls always include not only a supper but a *déjeûner*, I declin'd being of the party.——And now, my dear, let me intreat you to hasten the first intelligence with regard to the cause, to your affectionate

S. O.

LET-

LETTER XCVIII.

To Mrs. Obrien.—From Lady Helen Nugent.

Edinburgh, November.

JOY, my dear friend! Joy to you, to us, and all!—The matter is happily decided, and the verdict compleatly in favor of Lord Melrofs. Enclos'd are the newspapers; if you have patience to read them, you will exceed me in that virtue. Thank Heaven, my appearance was unneceffary, for moft heartily did I pray that it might be fo. We have had grand doings in confequence.—Engagements for an age to come; Lord Melrofs frets in filence, I openly: neither daring to fet the good folks here at defiance, by taking our leaves immediately, as there feems to be a general confpiracy to keep his Lordfhip, fome time at leaft; and, but for a variety of

of reaſons which induce both to wiſh themſelves at home, our ſtay would be pleaſant enough, for we have all the gayety of a metropolis, without its confuſion.

Lord Melroſs has given a ball; and all the world were there. The women overwhelmed him. I however, was Lady Preſident, and therefore you will ſuppoſe it was manag'd juſt as it ought to be. Mr. Nugent, by my deſire, danc'd with Miſs Vernon, tho' I believe ſhe would not have been ſorry to have been a Counteſs, that night at leaſt, in order to have ſecur'd his friend, whoſe partner was not half ſo agreeable as herſelf. Our acquaintance, commenc'd ſo long ſince by eyes, improved very faſt. She was extremely curious about Lady Melroſs, on whom our converſation inſenſibly turn'd. How long they had been married; why ſhe ſtay'd in London; and if I thought her *very* handſome;

handſome.—Oh, this vile love! what enthuſiaſts does it make!—The ſweet girl could not ſpeak without an emphaſis; whilſt the conſciouſly heſitating tongue, the eye half ſinking under mine, half wandering after thoſe of Lord Melroſs, betray'd the ſhare they took in all that related to him.

"That appears a mighty amiable girl, Mr. Nugent is dancing with!" ſaid his Lordſhip to me; "are you acquainted with her?"

"Only by name," return'd I, "till this evening's introduction."

"Miſs *Vernon!* I think," added he, looking earneſtly at her, and dwelling upon the word.

"*You* I find are acquainted with her by name too," ſaid I, ſmiling.—

"My heart claims acquaintance with all who bear that," he replied, vaguely ſmiling alſo; "yet it has not the ſame recommendation to every body; ſince I think

think we both know thoſe, who were willing to part with it."—To this I anſwer'd nothing. I could have told a tale that would have made the whole ball-room vaniſh from before him, but a little of your prudence came acroſs me, and I forbore. On our return home, each of us found letters. His were from Lady Melroſs, (the firſt he has had ſome time;) mine from you. Dear curioſity would, I believe, have made us willingly exchange them. Each however, was oblig'd to content themſelves with their own, with which neither, by the bye, were very much delighted. "He *ought* to be in England," he ſaid, in a fretful tone; "*his affairs*"—"Yes he *ought* to be in England."—And ſo you ought indeed, my dearly beloved couſin, thought I, on reading your account of Janetta's proceedings. A ruinous lawſuit on one ſide, no œconomical wife on the other, might ſoon deſtroy

deſtroy a princely fortune. As to reputation, ſince you, my dear, vouch for her, I have nothing to urge, but ſhe is very wrong.—And what is ſtill worſe, tho' he *ought* to be in England, he muſt be in Scotland, for ſome time longer at leaſt. —Lady Somerſet too with her! ſtrange! very ſtrange! I think I will croak a little. —Shall I?—Yet no, hang it! ſuch a charming fellow for a huſband, and ſo good a huſband too! it is impoſſible ſhe can even fancy ſhe loves any one elſe.— Beſides after all, ſhe is young, handſome, and may be capable of much error, without any guilt.

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I was interrupted by Mr. Nugent.—" a charming day!" " a walk upon the Calton." In November too! thank you my good Sir! no more hurricanes for me: if I have not bloom enough to ſtand by the

roſy-

rosy-cheek'd damsels here, I must positively send an express to my sister-in-law. —Why I should sail over the Firth like a Balloon, with such a wind.—But these men are possess'd.—They would drag me up all the hills, without remembering that I was born an Earl's daughter, and never knew so vulgar a thing as the use of my feet.—I must teach Mr. Nugent better manners, as to Lord Melross, he is a downright savage in high life.——You do not mention Mr. Obrien, or yourself.—How are you, my dear friend?—You may safely write to me, for I shall not be gone yet.——Adieu,

Yours ever,

HELEN NUGENT.

LET-

LETTER XCIX.

To Mrs. Obrien.—From Lady Helen Nugent.

Edinburgh, Dec.

I Write to you again, in a diſtreſs which will not allow me to do any thing but write. My father is deſperately ill.—By the laſt poſt, he receiv'd information that the ribbon, he ſo long expected, has been otherwiſe beſtow'd. His indignation was ſo extreme, that we all trembled for the conſequences. He forſwore the Court with a bitterneſs I had never ſeen in him before, and immediately threw up all his employments. Spenſer has been ſent for expreſs, ſo has my mother; but I fear both will be too late.—Oh, Heavens! *Death!* how little do we know of that formidable word, till circumſtances teach us to reflect upon it. To ſee thoſe features

tures we have ſo often beheld lighted up with animation, ſtiffening under the influence of a cold and inviſible hand,—to behold an unknown power fruſtrating our efforts, and forcibly withdrawing from us a being long conſider'd as a part of our own;—to trace him by deſtruction, and be oblig'd to acknowledge him by the moſt terrible of his effects;—

* * * * * * * * * *

Mr. Nugent has oblig'd me to leave off: indeed I have blinded myſelf, and knew not what I wrote, or thought. Adieu! do not write to me! do not attempt to philoſophize—I have almoſt quarrell'd with every body that has.—Ah, my dear, it is a *father!*—Adieu.

H. N.

LET-

LETTER C.

To Mrs. Obrien.—From Lady Helen Nugent.

Edinburgh, Dec.

ONCE more I ſit down. Nobody here will allow me to indulge a grief, which, as I muſt feel, it is of no ſervice to ſuppreſs. Lady Somerſet and my brother arriv'd yeſterday, but at the ſad moment when all worldly diſtinctions are loſt, Edward was the perſon my father chiefly choſe to converſe with.

"Mr. Nugent," ſaid he this morning, "tho' I die a proteſtant, you ſhall be my confeſſor. And the more ſo, as I know none to whom I have been equally unjuſt. You are indeed a *good* man. A ſpecies of diſtinction, ſon Spenſer, which will I hope, be earlier known to you, than to your father.—Value each other," added

added he, joining their hands, "it will be the intereſt of both to do ſo, and do you, Edward, love my daughter. She has ſuffer'd much for your ſake, and deſerves her reward. But above all preſerve your independency. Enter into no politics, or, if you do, truſt no miniſters, and Heaven bleſs you both, my ſons!"

"I hop'd, my Lord," ſaid Spenſer, "you had reſerv'd a more particular bleſſing for me."

"A bleſſing, my dear ſon, is always the ſame. I rather fear it was embitter'd, by being divided.—However you know I cannot talk.—Take it as you pleaſe.—If you are contented, I care not how.—Your ſiſter's ſilent tears, are a ſeverer reproach, than the ſtifled contempt I read in your eyes.—You will have an elevated title and a noble eſtate.—Uſe them as you ought.—They have not been able to preſerve me from ſickneſs, diſappointment,

and

and mortality; each of which will bring an additional pang, in proportion as your advantages have been mispent.—To you, my dear girl," added he, casting his eyes emphatically on Mr. Nugent, "I *leave* a blessing.—Be, what you have ever been! reconcile your brother, and let him not want any tribute of affection from you.—"My Lord," he continued, turning to Lord Melross——

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I was unable to proceed. All will be decided by the event of this consultation.—Good God! in so *short* a time! Oh, my dear! could all children, when but tempted to think lightly of their parents, to slight their affection, or disappoint their views, but truly paint to themselves, that agonizing hour, when their deepest regrets shall be superfluous, when the ear

can no longer receive the voice it lov'd, nor the eye retain the fond impreſſion of the form, what ſacrifice of their own tranſient, and youthful pleaſures, would they think too great!——I muſt break off. If this comes with a *black* ſeal—I need not, —indeed cannot ſay more.

Your Affectionate,

H. NUGENT.

LET-

LETTER CI.

To Mrs. Obrien—From Lady Helen Nugent.

Edinburgh, Jan.

I Write only a few lines, my dear friend, to thank you for both of yours.*—You have ſaid every thing that can be ſaid on the occaſion; but time and ſad experience, alone teach us to ſupport wounds of this nature. Mr. Nugent, I find, wrote you word I had been very ill. —I am now, however, much better, and ſhall ſet off for Mulberry-Mount the beginning of next week. Every thing relative to the laſt ſad ceremony, was ſettled before I was well enough to be acquainted with it; and Lady Somerſet and my brother went off in conſequence. Lord

*Omitted.

Melroſs has been detain'd here, and goes with us. He is impatient to be in London, as he has not heard from Janetta, this fortnight. Unſeeling woman!—Could ſhe be ſilent on ſuch an occaſion!—Is this faſhion? Is this the world?—Oh ye triflers of it, there will come an hour, when even you ſhall feel the want of the ſocial affections. Sickneſs, age, debility hover over thoſe gay ſcenes, you frequent, and wait but for the appointed period, to ſcatter their blackeſt influence there; the example ye have given, ſhall then be ſeen in its true colours; the giddy, and the vain, ſhall ſurround, without conſoling you; they ſhall drag you to amuſements you can no longer enjoy, ſhall talk to you of trifles you can no longer value, and when they find conſtitution unfit you for folly, ſhall leave you, with childiſh petulance, to the miſeries of ſolitude and thought. How unlike is Janetta, to that

noble

noble heart to which ſhe is united!—Alive to every tie, and every feeling, Lord Melroſs is the nobleman, without forgetting he is the man. Elegance, form, reſerve, are for the hours of gayety and public amuſement.—More elevated feelings, and ſuperior faculties, characterize him in the circle of domeſtic life. He has behav'd like an angel on this occaſion.—And I can never praiſe him too much. Mr. Nugent! my heart muſt make his panegyric.——Addreſs your next to Mulberry-Mount, whence expect to hear from

Your affectionate,

HELEN NUGENT.

LET-

LETTER CII.

To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mrs. Obrien.

Portland-Place, Jan.

A Dreadful, an overwhelming calamity, has ſwept away every meaner grief from my mind, and left it open only to one bitter pang.—Yet ſurely my preſaging heart, has in ſome moments of deſpondency and terror, forewarn'd me of it. I cannot reveal it. Let the infamous paper enclos'd, make a diſcovery, even friendſhip could ſcarce credit without it. Preſerve it, I intreat from every eye but your own; if poſſible from Mr. Nugent's. —I have form'd my reſolutions. If they are executed, you ſhall be made acquainted with them: if not, let them die in the boſom where they were conceiv'd. All griefs but this, I think I could have borne; but my heart is now wounded

thro'

thro' that of another, and like one who faints under a peſtilence, I ſhall die with the painful conſciouſneſs of breathing the fatal malignity to all deareſt to me. It has no ſignature, but I need not tell you the barbarous hand by which it was penned. I will not call her the wife of Lord Melroſs!—Never, no never, ſhould *that* name—Alas! that name, I once thought a ſecurity for every bleſſing the world could beſtow. I know not whether you can read this. It is blotted with the bitereſt tears I ever ſhed.——Farewell.

To George Obrien, Eſq.

Enclos'd in the foregoing.

WEARY, exhauſted, and almoſt vapour'd to death, on whom can I vent my ſpleen, with more propriety, than on him who makes it his ſtudy to mortify and expoſe me. After an everlaſting evening, ſpent in cards, ſcandal, and amidſt a ſet of

impertinents, who are only juſt more endurable than ſolitude, the noiſe of thoſe ſcreech-owls, whom Heaven, to puniſh me, has converted into watchmen, reminds me of the melancholy hour of four.—When I remember how day thus glides after day, and every ſucceeding one is only deſirable as a relief from the preſent, I am weary of myſelf, weary of the world, weary of all the tedious pageantry with which I am ſurrounded, and envy every wretch whoſe daily labour enſures a nightly repoſe, free from the toil of pulling off burthenſome ornaments, and the fear of dozing away reſtleſs hours, in fruitleſs attempts to ſleep.

Amidſt that gloom, thro' which the eye can ſcarce trace a hundredth part of the buildings of this immenſe metropolis, how many happy beings now enjoy uninterrupted repoſe, even in poverty; whilſt ſcatter'd tables, dim half burnt candles,

dles, and empty chairs, ſtare me in the face, more terribly than the memento mori on an old tombſtone. Ridiculous, that fools grown grey in the purſuit of ſomething that is at leaſt ſelf-dependent, ſhould pretend to moralize on the inſufficiency of worldly advantages. A modern woman of faſhion, is better able to write a treatiſe on their inſufficiency, than Plato himſelf.

Don't mention maſquerades to me! I hate them! I hate every thing! I have no wiſhes to form for the future, nor any ſatisfaction in the paſt. Unlimited indulgence, you told me, was happineſs; but have not both our lives contradicted the aſſertion? Whence is it that others attain that enviable alacrity of ſoul, I wiſh for in vain? Whence that enjoyment, which ſeems to brighten creation in their eyes? Whilſt I graſp at a ſhadow, and purſue it thro' a circle of pleaſures, which

the moment they ſubſide, leave my mind one vaſt void. How ſick am I of being *thought* happy! I will no longer encourage the deluſion! nor ſhall you uſurp what is denied me. Since the next joy to that of being ſucceſsful ourſelves, is the ſeeing others equally diſappointed. I will neither meet you, or ſend you the note. Support your own extravagancies, Sir, or learn not to reproach me for mine. My ſacrifices it ſeems are little, in return for the care you have taken of my reputation, "the rank *you* ſtudied to raiſe me to," and the fortune *you* ſecur'd to me.—I might indeed inſinuate, that my reputation was in no danger, till it approach'd the fatal infection of yours; that my rank (if indeed you had any ſhare in the fixing it,) was meant only to gratify your vanity, and my fortune to ſupport your extravagancies. That in ſhort, the mighty act of generoſity, you were at ſo much pains

to

to adorn with all the flowers of rhetoric, was only the effort of ſelf-love, to injure a man, who had too many advantages over you, ever to be forgiven. But theſe, Sir, are grating truths to a gentleman whoſe delicacy is ſo refin'd as to threaten the woman he pretends to love, and whoſe *modeſty* can even induce him to think, he may loſe on the compariſon with Lord M———. Be not alarm'd, Mr. Obrien! you have an infallible comforter! all you may loſe in the opinion of others, you will be ſure of gaining in your own, nor can your merits be ever undervalued, without your finding a more favourable, if not more juſt eſtimate, within, to conſole you under the mortification.

If I was to conſent to meet you, what aſſurance can I have, that you do not deſign to expoſe, or betray me? What view but that, could you have, in whiſpering me ſo publickly in Pall-Mall? Lady Car-

rington had her eye upon us, I ſaw; but ſhe is pious; and, moreover, ſhe is poor; a much greater ſecurity for her ſilence, and the incredulity of her hearers, than the other. Your imprudence coſt me thirty guineas to that old cat Mrs. Venables, and I ſuppoſe ſhe would have levied another contribution on me to night, but that I took care not to ſend her the invitation, till I knew ſhe was engag'd. And *à propos!* I wonder how our travellers go on! —On the high road from the land of matrimony, I ſuppoſe? pray Heaven, it may not prove one of divorces. No fear however of that, where my prodigal Lord is concern'd; ſince he who ſteers by a golden magnet, has little to fear from tempeſts. —Oh, what a delectable expedition! Methinks I ſee the two beaux alternately dandle little maſter, while that clown Peter, with a head of hair, as yellow as a buſh of heath in full bloſſom, comes buzzing head foremoſt, like a huge beetle,

at

at the end of every ſtage. But no; I cry ye mercy! my Lord travels in ſtate. —Powder'd monkeys behind.—Monſieur Verſange, breathing ambroſial gales of pomade, and bergamot, at a leſs aweful diſtance. For are we not going to *E-din-burgh*, as my aunt gracefully drawls it out. And who knows what conqueſts my *caro ſpoſo* is to make there?

I ſhall be vapour'd to death on Monday. All the world will be at the Pantheon. So I think I will once more hear what you have to ſay. You will know me by the uſual bracelet. The enclos'd will redeem the jewels.—For Lord M—, to do him juſtice, is generous enough.—He has left me unlimited credit; tho' how to account for my drafts, Heaven knows. But, *the mode, my Lord, faſhionable extravagance—all the world does ſo.*—Why, if theſe reaſons are not ſufficient, let him

find

find better. I may affirm, with a ſafe conſcience, they are the true ones.

Why did I write this nonſenſe, which after all may betray me? Truly I believe, to vent my ſpleen; for moſt horridly ſplenetic have I been; and you are wiſe enough, never to give me many opportunities of doing it perſonally.—But it won't do, Mr. Obrien! *I* may dreſs, and you may flatter, or evade, but in the end, I ſhall die with *ennui*, and you will ſhoot yourſelf at a gaming table. However my ſpirits are returning; do not come near me to-morrow nevertheleſs. My eyes will be as red as a certain lady's after a matrimonial *tête à tête* with you. And now I will try to reſt. Is it not a horrid thing to be oblig'd to exhauſt oneſelf in reflection, and fretting, before we can enjoy the bleſſing of repoſe!—Would all my gorgeous apparel adorn'd its native ſilk-

worm,

worm, rather than I had the trouble of having it pull'd off!——Farewell! only one word more! bring your wife to town; I will call on her in my way to the Pantheon, as I intend to be very brilliant, and grievouſly ſuſpect her to be the cauſe of ſome lectures I have had from my Lord. If ſhe *muſt* tell, let her have ſomewhat at leaſt, worth revealing.

P. S. I have juſt recollected my mourning; it will be impoſſible for me to go to the Pantheon. My ſober Lord would rave downright if he heard it. The whole family would mutiny. I ſhall however, go to Lady Carington's, which is the next thing to the maſquerade; and will conſider, how we ſhall meet, if poſſible, on that evening; for to ſtay at home, is too inſupportable an idea. If I call in Portland-Place on Monday night, be in the way to lead me to the carriage; I will then

then tell you when, and where, we may see each other.—Till then adieu!—I the rather incline to the appointment, as my Lord will certainly be at home by the Birth-Night, and it may then be some time before we can meet.

LET-

LETTER CIII.

To Edward Nugent, Esq.—From Lord Melrose.

Grosvenor-Square, Jan.

ONCE more, dear Nugent, give me joy on being at home! Nay more, on finding joy there. Absence, that magnifier of every little fear, had rais'd so many giants to exercise my quixotism upon, that I return'd full of cares, anxieties, and distrusts; reach'd Barnet about ten at night, and in defiance of a heavy snow, and Versange's long face, (whose valour is not the most burthensome part of his travelling equipage,) chang'd horses without a moments delay, and before eleven, rattled over the stones of Grosvenor-Square. My door was open'd by a boy, while on each side of an immense fire, close under which was a rough mat the hot

hot cinders were ſcorching, lay the porter and his companion, ſtretch'd like two of Silenus's votaries, with various emblematical ornaments at their feet; and buried in a ſtupefaction ſo profound, that even the thundering rap which announc'd my approach, did not wake them. So much for the bleſſed effects of modern luxury, which ſo often ſuffers, by the vices it nouriſhes.——Lady Melroſs, I hardly expected to find at home, as I had not forewarn'd her of my arrival; and by the lights which were yet burning in her dreſſing-room, (from whence iſſued two Hairdreſſers, an Abigail, and an *Abigail's* Abigail,) I ſuppos'd ſhe had not long been gone out. I threw myſelf into a chair, and abandon'd my mind to a train of reflections, from which I was rous'd by a rap at the door.—Janetta was return'd.—The pleaſing effect, however, of this contradiction to the ideas I had form'd of her conduct, were inſtantly ſunk in alarm

for

for her health. She had fainted in the hall; and the buſtle inſtantaneouſly reaching me, I flew to aſſiſt her. How touching was that inſenſibility which was the effect of conſtitution: ſince I can hardly flatter myſelf it had its origin in tenderneſs. That mortal paleneſs, incident to thoſe who are not ſubject to this weakneſs; the cloſed lid; the lovely regularity of features, which have at that moment, nothing elſe to recommend them; her mourning, mild, graceful, and becoming, all combin'd to make her one of the moſt intereſting, and charming figures, I had ever ſeen.—I forgot Mrs. Obrien, I forgot every thing, but that ſhe was an angel, and my wife. We carried her into the parlour, but it was near half an hour ere ſhe recover'd. I, in the interim, curs'd my own folly in ſuffering her to be ſurpris'd with the unmeaning faces of my blockheads, who had diſcover'd my return, before ſhe was quite out of her

chair.

chair. And Oh, that ſuch a woman ſhould want a mind thought I! or worſe than that, ſhould ſuffer it to be enſlaved by frivolous purſuits, and deluſive pleaſures! —That fair boſom expos'd to every coxcomb, to whom a box of pearl powder is as admirable; thoſe eyes lighted up with falſe animation, while the heart languiſhes in real *ennui*. Open them, dear Janetta, and be henceforth the creature nature deſign'd thee, when ſhe impreſs'd upon thy countenance, the image of every virtue! —Open them, and make me bluſh for denying thee, a ſingle moment, the homage, thou wilt henceforward dare to deſerve.

She *did* open them! whether to fulfil all my noble invocations, remains to be diſcover'd. Thou wilt eaſily ſuppoſe, I was in no humour to ſcrutinize into her conduct; and, ſatisfied with being now on the ſpot, the guardian of my own peace, and

and honor, I resolv'd to revert no more to the past. Dropt the whole history of her last silence, ask'd not a question about her drafts; but amus'd myself, with giving her a rhodomontade account of my Scotch expedition, interspers'd with as many egotisms, anecdotes, and lies, as might serve to recommend myself, or render the rest of the world ridiculous.

And now, dear Nugent, tell me, how does my fair fellow traveller? Prevail on her to come to town. Advice, amusement, every thing attend her here, that can conduce to the restoration of her mind, or her frame. The apartments you did not condescend to occupy on your last journey, are still yours. My chief purpose in scribbling this, was to press your visit, and by complying, you will affix an additional obligation, on your sincere friend,

MELROSS.

LETTER CIV.

To Lady Helen Nugent—From Mrs. Obrien.

Winbrook, Jan.

THE event of that cruel intelligence, I communicated in my former letter, remains now to be explain'd. What tears! what anguiſh, has it not coſt me. The laſt ſad week of my life ſeems to have comprized whole years of it. Irreſolution, fear, anxiety, by turns harraſs'd and ſhock'd me. From expoſing the infamy of Lady Melroſs, I too clearly perceiv'd, I ſhould only involve myſelf in it; ſince the eſteem, (Oh, let me not diſſemble the truth!) the unfortunate attachment, once ſuppos'd to have exiſted between the parties wrong'd, would but incline the world to think them the more artful of the two. —The character of Mr. Obrien, left me

no

no doubt of his daring to defend the villainy he dar'd to practiſe; and what tie could with-hold Lord Melroſs, from that revenge the world but too much juſtifies? —From the terrible image of murder, deſperation, and infamy, my ſoul ſhrunk with horror.—Alas! the alternative was only leſs formidable. To bury in ſilence thoſe wrongs, which wrung my very ſoul; to be the acceſſary,—I will not think of it, leſt I ſhould repent. In a word, I determin'd to come to town; to encounter this unfeeling woman, who hop'd to humble the being, ſhe dar'd to injure, and awe her into chaſtity, if not into remorſe.—Mr. Obrien however, negligent alike to the object, or the victims of his vices, never mention'd my leaving Winbrook, (where he came down for two days,) till the carriage was at the door; when he aſk'd me, as he was ſetting his hair before the glaſs, "if I would go to town?"

To

To his aſtoniſhment, I replied in the affirmative; and, having previouſly order'd every thing, inſtantly accompanied him.—We went Saturday night. I wiſh'd not to be ſeen, and therefore ſtay'd at home the two enſuing days, except the ſingle hour when I left my name in Groſvenor-Square, in order to afford her a pretext for the meditated viſit. True to the time of her imaginary triumph, Lady Melroſs was announc'd a little after ten. Alone, unſupported, tremulous, with nothing but innocence to aid me, I ſtrove in vain to collect myſelf. She enter'd, elegantly dreſt; ſurely I do not wrong her, when I think ſhe wears white; for ſo delicate a tint, I ſcarce ever beheld.

"Good God, my dear," cried ſhe, throwing herſelf into a chair, as if fatigued with the weight of her own ornaments, can you pardon me for breaking in upon you ſo late! You were monſtrouſly good to leave your ticket in Groſvenor-Square.

I fear'd you would eſcape us again, as you are ſuch a dear antideluvian creature, or I ſhould not have return'd the viſit at this *unſeaſonable* hour. But perhaps," added ſhe, ſtooping to adjuſt her trimmings, (poſſibly to conceal her ſmiles,) "perhaps you ſit up for Obrien."

"That, Madam, is carrying it too far! not quite ſo antideluvian a creature as to imagine a man of *ton* will come home, when he may have ſo many agreeable engagements abroad. Your Ladyſhip, it is highly probable, will meet him."

"Me! No! I don't think ſo," ſhe return'd, with conſcious aukwardneſs, riſing and walking to the glaſs. "I aſſure you I ſhould have been here two hours ago, if the horrid fellows had not been ſo tedious with my hair, that it was abſolutely impoſſible; and then Dornon kept me two ages more, before he came to put in the ornaments. 'Tis a pity one can't afford to retain all thoſe people in one's

ſervice; for my part, I proteſt I ſhould think a few hundreds a year, well beſtowed."

"A Hair-dreſſer is a very neceſſary creature, I confeſs, but I cannot ſay I think him an acquiſition in a family."

"Oh! mine is the only one in England, Madam, notwithſtanding he has made me ſuch a fright to-night," and ſhe turn'd round with a ſmile; a ſweet, an inſinuating ſmile, which gave new life and vivacity to her features. I look'd at her in ſilence. I believe I ſigh'd.

"Come, I'll make a rake of you to-night; pull off your cap, and we'll ſend for a hat and domino from Bond-Street. I promis'd to look in on your friend the Ducheſs of M——, they are all for the Pantheon, and you will be a welcome addition to the party."

"Pardon me; your Ladyſhip is much too ſplendid for ſuch a companion, and the Ducheſs's party will, I am ſure, be very

ry unfit for me to mingle with, ſo undreſt."

"Abſurd! who minds what they wear at a maſquerade! for my own part, I wonder how I am ever fit to be ſeen. But, as my Lord ſays, there is a ſort of ingratitude in neglecting things when we poſſeſs them." My Lord I believe, my dear, has never had much occaſion for ſuch a reproach.

"Eſpecially *jewels*, Madam; ſince we know not into what hands they may fall, to impair their luſtre." She rais'd her eyes with quickneſs, but dropt them again, as if doubt was abſurd.

"Very true;" ſhe replied at length with a gape. "Laſt time I was in Hanover-Square, I loſt the drop of my ear-ring. Come! come!" with another gape, "you ſhall go ſomewhere. I cannot bear to leave you thus alone."

"Of all evils," ſaid I, ſmiling, "that is the laſt I ſhould fear. Maſquerades,

however, are not an amuſement I am at any time fond of; eſpecially when unattended by my huſband. As I have not yet engag'd any other protector!"—I ſaid this half lightly, for my courage was unequal to the occaſion. Yet ſhe grew alarmed: had I been doubtful of her guilt, her not noticing this ſpeech, would have confirm'd it.

"Pho! pho! how childiſh you are! you will find protectors enough, I dare ſay."

"What in the huſbands of others!" return'd I, ſolicitous to come to the explanation. "From perſonal inſult, we may, Madam; but who ſhall ſecure us from ſlander or diſgrace? Nay, ſometimes from deſerving them."

"I would aſk your meaning Mrs. O-brien," cried ſhe, haughtily, "if I thought you had any."

"Rather ſay, you would aſk it, if you thought, I had *not*, Madam." Her features

tures convuls'd with her efforts to conceal emotion, and her colour went, and came, with aſtoniſhing rapidity. Mine fluctuated, as the blood throbb'd by turns to my heart, and to my cheek. Yet her pride got the better even of her fears, and riſing with the ſuperlative aſſurance of a woman of the world,

"Your life, Madam, has been an enigma as well as your words; preſerve the advantage you have ever had, that of nobody's being at the trouble to reſolve either. If you have any mean ſuſpicions"——

"No, Lady Melroſs! mine are not *ſuſpicions*, they are proofs.—And ſuch proofs, as teach me to bluſh for my ſex, tho' they, I hope, will never have an opportunity of doing ſo for me." Oh, my dear, I really pitied her.

"Great God!" ſhe exclaim'd, ſinking into her chair, the villain then *has* betray'd me."

"Rather ſay, that Heaven ordain'd the guilty commerce ſhould betray itſelf.—And that by a proof which will ever remain, ſince it is under your own hand."

"The letter, the letter," cried ſhe ſtarting up with phrenzical eagerneſs. "Then it is plain I am undone.—Make your advantage of it, Madam! I neither expect, or deſire any thing from you. Trick yourſelf out in the pageantry of virtue, and make a merit of this mighty diſcovery with Lord Melroſs. He will adore your ingenuity, but take care he does not find that your *only* ſuperiority over me."

"When he *does*, Madam, may *I* ſtand before the woman I have wrong'd, overwhelm'd with ſhame and remorſe. The reſignation which I have learnt from misfortune, now enables me to liſten to inſults, which none, ſurely, could offer, but one who dares to merit them."

"Ridiculous hypocriſy! be frank Mrs. Obrien, you may truſt yourſelf ſafely with

me,

me, ſince you have a ſure argument to invalidate all I can advance. I know you, Madam, and expect nothing from you.— I *know you.*" She repeated with a ſort of vulgar bitterneſs, ſhe *could* only learn from Mr. Obrien.

" *Know me*, Lady Melroſs! I will venture to ſay in my own defence, there is not purity enough in your nature, to judge of mine. My fortune, my reputation, my peace," I added, with an agitation I could no longer ſuppreſs, " have been alternately offer'd up as ſacrifices to you, by a man, whoſe ingratitude, and barbarity, will one day wring your heart as bitterly as he has often done mine.— To correct a ſenſibility too turbulent for my repoſe, and to yield in ſilent humility to the dictates of Providence, has been the buſineſs of my life, and is its reward. —Of the ſtruggles I have endured in the endeavour, that Being to whom my heart

now bows in ſilent adoration, alone is the judge. To me He has allotted the painful taſk of pointing out your errors; of correcting the paſt; and, if you are yet capable of remorſe, of guarding you againſt the future. Believe me, Madam, (for I am now calm,) I will ſpeak to you neither as an enemy, or a rival; on the contrary, I will teach you how to add luſtre to your beauty, and dignity to your rank: to perpetuate thoſe temporary advantages to age, and even if poſſible to immortality." I pauſed; my eye endeavour'd to trace in hers, ſome emotion of tenderneſs, and regret: but rooting them upon the ground, ſhe remain'd fixed in ſullen ſilence. "I have known too much of misfortune, Madam," continued I, "to exult over that of another; but my heart, I hope, has been purified by thoſe ſorrows, of which guilt has never yet been the companion, however they have been blended with er-

ror.

ror. Is there an inſtance of your life, in which you have had cauſe to complain of fortune? you were an orphan without knowing the helpleſſneſs of one. The early companion of a woman diſtinguiſh'd for her virtues, you had an equal opportunity of forming your heart, and your manners, which a treacherous liſtleſſneſs of ſoul, alone induc'd you to ſlight. How did you manifeſt your gratitude to Lord and Lady Somerſet? By deriſion and neglect. How to Lord Melroſs, for the moſt unbounded generoſity, and confidence! By betraying him. How in a word, to that God who beſtow'd all theſe bleſſings? By abuſing them. Probe your own heart, Madam! lay aſide the veil of the world; that heart will acknowledge your crimes have increas'd with your power; and let this humiliating moment, convince you, your miſery will increaſe with your crimes." Again I paus'd, but ſhe did not anſwer. "Can you think with-

out ſhuddering," continued I, "that you are likely to be the mother of a being who will one day revenge theſe complicated wrongs. Revenge them! at a period, when age ſhall have ſtolen thoſe attractions, which ſecure you conſolation, and the vigor which enables you to ſhake off deſpondency. Has even *preſent* felicity, been the conſequence of vice? Your tears confeſs it has not. Nor did I need that aſſurance: in the boſom of affluence, and proſperity, your life is by your own confeſſion one vaſt void. The active powers of your ſoul, abſorb'd in voluptuouſneſs, you can feel at twenty, the apathy of an exhauſted old age. And is it love that is thus become not only your ruin, but that of thouſands beſide? It is not, it cannot be! the dreadful habit of ſeeking external amuſement, leads from error into guilt, till public diſgrace becomes the conſequence of negligence, and the conſciouſ-

neſs

neſs of having no longer either fortune, reputation, or virtue to loſe, induces you to perpetuate crimes, which ſecure infamy in this world, and puniſhment in the next." I paus'd again; but I might have gone on for ages. Abſorb'd, drown'd in tears, ſhe ſobb'd even to a painful exceſs. My ready eyes bore witneſs, that I was not unaffected with her ſufferings.—Oh, could I be ſo! was ſhe not the wife of Lord Melroſs! the diſtinguiſh'd, the admir'd object, of a thouſand hearts; ſhe, to whom ſo many had look'd up! on whom none but herſelf, could have privileged any to look down. Degraded, humbled, torn with conflicting paſſions; ſunk beneath a woman, whoſe only poſſible ſuperiority was in her heart! that heart bled for her!—

"How low, how mean, do I appear! both in your eyes and my own," ſaid ſhe, at length, half raiſing a countenance diſfigured with tears. "Leave me, I intreat,

Mrs. Obrien! I can never—no *never*," ſhe added emphatically, "ſurvive this diſgraceful moment."

"It is the only proof you can give of your repentance, Madam. Let your future life atteſt it. I will raiſe friends to intercede with Lord Melroſs"——

"*Intercede!*" cried ſhe eagerly, "Good Heavens! you do not mean to betray me! —By that virtue whoſe repreſentative you are on earth, I adjure you not to drive me to deſpair. I have no hope, no friend in the univerſe, but you. Preſcribe to, command, diſpoſe of me! I will exiſt no longer than you deſire me ſo to do. —Reſtore but that fatal letter, and ages will be too ſhort for my gratitude!"— *Reſtore* the letter, Oh, Lady Helen, that requeſt was but too ſelfiſh! I felt it ſo. Real repentance would have waſted itſelf in promiſes and tears, ere it would have thought of that demand. Before I could reply, the door open'd, and, in a gay domino,

mino, his maſk in his hand, Mr. Obrien enter'd. He ſtarted; and well he might, for Lady Melroſs had ſunk at my feet, and both were in tears.

"Why heyday! ladies," cried he, diſſembling his alarm, "ſure I have not interrupted you!—My fair Lucia, and Marcia, are you going to exhibit under the auſpices of Melpomené! what think you of me for a Juba? I am never behindhand in a frolic you know."

"The ſituation in which you find us, Sir," cried I, collecting myſelf, "would, I ſhould imagine, need no explanation.—If it does, take the trouble of examining your pocket-book, and that will probably inform you of your loſs."

"What you *have* found that curſed letter," ſaid he, with his uſual unbluſhing effrontery, "well, thanks to my old friend fortune, it fell into no worſe hands. But how is it I ſee *you* thus degraded!" turning to Janetta.

"*Degraded,*"

"*Degraded,*" return'd ſhe, rejecting his attempt to raiſe her; "begone Sir, and bluſh for your own vices, but leave me in ſilence to expiate mine."

"If Mr. Obrien bluſhes, Madam," interrupted I, "it will be with indignation at ſuch an idea."

"Nay faith! ladies, I have been a moſt unlucky dog, to get out of the good-graces of both.—However, as the *loſs* of this letter has been the cauſe of diſpleaſure on one ſide, and the *finding* it on the other, the ſhorteſt way of ſettling the matter, is by taking it back again."

"That Sir, I judg'd would be your intention, and therefore put it out of your power. The letter is no longer in my hands."

"Your keys, however, Madam! I ſhall ſatisfy myſelf by a ſurvey of your delectable epiſtles to-morrow morning."

"You ſee, Madam," ſaid I, turning to Lady Melroſs, "the *humanity* of Mr. O-

brien's

brien's character. Repentance may expiate your crime, but can you ever ceaſe bluſhing for the tempter."

"By my ſoul," ſaid he, "none but Xantippe, ever had ſuch a tongue!"

"I have done, Mr. Obrien. Theſe are wrangles I have hitherto carefully avoided, and now cenſure myſelf for ſtooping to. Time, and an aweful eternity alone can make you ſerious. And remember, Sir, if indeed at that terrible moment, memory is not obliterated in anguiſh, how often you have added inſult to injury, and wantonly triumph'd in the miſery of one, to whom the Almighty allotted an equal portion of felicity, with yourſelf. To you Lady Melroſs, I will ſet an example, I hope one day to ſee you worthy of.—Guilty, as you cannot but feel yourſelf, I cannot alſo but feel you unfortunate.—Solemnly ſwear, therefore, that you will not, under any pretence whatever, ſee, write to, or converſe

with

Mr. Obrien, but in the accidental *rencontres* of a mix'd company, and I will give you a faithful assurance that I will never betray you."

"You are too good, too good," sobb'd she, "on my knees"——

"Reserve that attitude, Madam, for the God you are going to invoke; but remember if I have the slightest cause of suspicion in future, I will not fail to seek a confirmation, that must inevitably destroy you."

"If you distrust me, let me be buried."

"No, Lady Melross; it is not by secluding ourselves from the world, we disprove our attachment to it. The human mind, created for, and accustom'd to action, only languishes in a gloomy inertity without it. Live to your own heart, Madam, in all material points; comply with those dear to you in trifles; and your hours will be acceptable to God, useful to man, and pleasing to yourself."

The

The moſt ſolemn abjuration of Mr. O-brien, then took place, notwithſtanding his frequent efforts to interrupt her.—Oh, my dear! how worthleſs are outward advantages! Of what moment to her, was her exquiſite beauty, or thoſe rich trimmings with which the floor was overſpread. —She aroſe, disfigur'd, humbled: and let me avow, that I could not but recollect at once, the ſimilitude, and difference, between her ſituation and mine after the explanation with Lady Somerſet. Had I, like Lady Melroſs, been a guilty, ſelf-condemn'd wretch, how ſhould I have ſunk to her level, ſhared perhaps, thro' fear in her crimes, nay, ſued at the feet of Lady Somerſet, for the mercy I am enabled to grant.

And now, my dear, what can you think is wanting to this ſcene? Yet a ſuſpicion even of a more horrible, tho' not a more criminal

criminal nature, has lately been awakened in my mind. Some time ago, a clerk of Mr. Davenport's brought me a draft with my own ſignature. He requeſted ſimply to know, whether it was my writing. It was not. But I avow'd it, tho' the ſum was far beyond what I ſhould have drawn for. One being in the world only could have ventur'd this forgery, which was often repeated, and my ſuſpicions went no further than Mr. Obrien, by whom indeed, it was afterwards gayly avow'd. The day before I left town, two gentlemen call'd in Portland-Place; one was an eminent banker in the city, the other a ſtranger. They were ſhut up three hours with Mr. Obrien, and the ſubject of their conference, is ſtill a profound ſecret; but my prophetic heart aſſures me it was ſomething ſimilar to the event I have mention'd. When Mr. Obrien came out of the apartment, his eyes were ſtrain'd, red, and burning;

ing; his cheek flush'd with the deepest scarlet, and his voice tremulous. To me he said nothing on the subject, but guess how much I must be shock'd on being subjected to an apprehension so degrading.

* * * * * * * * * *

The morning after my parting with Lady Melross, I had a note from her, in which she conjur'd me to remember my promises of secrecy; said she had had a long fainting fit, the evening before, occasion'd by her terror on finding her Lord return'd from Scotland; but that his behaviour had convinc'd her, he had no suspicions of the past, and that she relied on me for the future. Oh, let her look well to that future!—Should she fall again, what is there can console or justify me! Much, much, do I fear, that whatever the event of this singular stroke

ſtroke of fate, apprehenſion alone will ever embitter the life, of

Your affectionate,

S. O.

End of the THIRD VOLUME.

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